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MOVIE HISTORY A SURVEY

SECOND EDITION

DOUGLAS GOMERY AND
CLARA PAFORT-OVERDUIN



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MOVIE HISTORY

How can we understand the history of film?

Historical facts don't answer the basic questions of film history. History, as this fascinating book shows, is more than the simple accumulation of film titles, facts and figures. This is a survey of over 100 years of cinema history, from its beginnings in 1895, to its current state in the twenty-first century.

An accessible, introductory text, *Movie History: A Survey* looks at not only the major films, filmmakers, and cinema institutions throughout the years, but also extends to the production, distribution, exhibition, technology and reception of films. The textbook is divided chronologically into four sections, using the timeline of technological changes:

Section One looks at the era of silent movies from 1895 to 1927; Section Two starts with the coming of sound and covers 1928 until 1950; Section Three runs from 1951 to 1975 and deals with the coming and development of television; and Section Four focuses on the coming of home video and the transition to digital, from 1975 to 2010.

Key pedagogical features include:

- Timelines in each section help students to situate the films within a broader historical context
- Case Study Boxes with close-up analysis of specific film histories and a particular emphasis on film reception
- Lavishly illustrated with over 450 color images to put faces to names, and to connect pictures to film titles
- Margin Notes add background information and clarity
- Glossary for clear understanding of the key terms
- References and Further Reading at the end of each chapter to enhance further study

Written by two highly respected film scholars and experienced teachers, *Movie History* is the ideal textbook for students studying film history.

Douglas Gomery is emeritus professor at the University of Maryland, USA. His publications include two prize-winning books, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation* (1991) and *Who Owns the Media?* (2000).

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MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

SECOND EDITION

Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin

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PREFACE

THE SECOND EDITION OF *MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY*

The core purposes of *Movie History: A Survey* are to survey the various technologies available for movie making and movie viewing, to survey the major business and national institutions in different times and places, to survey the changing aesthetic strategies for story-telling, to survey the social conditions of movie making and movie viewing, and to note the political practices of nation-states in shaping movie making and viewing. We make no pretense that we have created all the historical analysis in this book. We have tried to survey the questions and arguments we have found most helpful, and to explain them as clearly, systematically and logically as we were able.

We completed our historical analysis at the beginning of the twenty-first century as recent events cannot be analyzed using the historical methods discussed. We are still caught up in these changes and their impact cannot be fully established. For example, how long will downloading videos of movies last and will it continue to be controlled by filmmakers? Instead of trying to analyze recent changes, we will provide you with a systematic approach for doing so. *Movie History: A Survey* encourages all readers to question the premises, logic, and evidentiary bases of all accounts of cinema's beginning and development and to engage in their own original movie historical research.

HISTORY IS SELECTION

We assume that this is never *the* history, but always *a* history. Authors make choices on what they think is absolutely necessary to write about and what they want to exclude. Authors also make choices on what theories they use and what methods they prefer. Since we believe that movie history is not limited to movies themselves, we chose to include the production, distribution, and the reception of movies. To understand what is made you need to know who made the movies; in what circumstances films were made; what technological devices were available to change screenplays (sometimes called scripts) into movies; how and where films were distributed; where audiences could watch films; how popular particular films were with different audiences and why. We will show you how these different aspects are interrelated. When we discuss a certain film style, for example, we will not only analyze the cinematographic characteristics but we will also analyze the context in which these films came into being and were shown.

In this book we will focus on fiction films of feature length. This means we skipped documentaries, experimental film and animation. We do, however, refer to these forms of film if they influenced the development

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of fiction films. In the first and second sections we concentrate on Western movies from the United States and Europe but in the third section we do include the so-called “world cinema” amongst which are movies from Japan, China, and India.

We start our Movie History in 1895, the year in which the first film screening took place. We end our history at the beginning of the twenty-first century and will dedicate a chapter in our epilog to recent technological advances like digital media and the Internet. Unlike other technological inventions, like the coming of sound, we do not yet know how movie history will be changed by digital technology. Will there still be cinemas where people gather and watch a movie? Will all cinemas be equipped with digital projectors streaming live concerts or football games? Although not enough time has gone by for us to put these developments into a historical perspective, we still believe that we should take digital technologies into account because of the profound impact they are likely to have on the way movies will be produced, distributed, and consumed and these issues are discussed in our closing epilog.

We use the timeline of technological changes in film production, exhibition and consumption as the ordering principle for this book. In Section One we discuss the era of silent movies from 1895 to 1927; Section Two starts with the coming of sound and covers 1928 until 1950; Section Three runs from 1951 until 1975 and deals with the coming of television, wide-screen in the 1950s, the development of cable television, satellite transmission, and home video in the 1970s; the impact of Internet and digital technology in the 1990s is discussed in Section Four.

HOW WE WROTE *MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY*

We decided to take Hollywood as the backbone of this study because by the end of World War I in 1918, Hollywood had become the strongest economic film industry in the Western world, and it still is today. Although the French film industry was the first to dominate the world film market, due to a lack of innovation it lost its power and was surpassed by the Americans, who perfected a production and business model that would help them conquer the global film market. Our assumption is that European filmmakers had to respond to the economic power of the US film and had to think of ways to keep themselves in business. Often European filmmakers were helped by their governments who decreed laws to protect the national film industries.

Film, however, is not simply an economic commodity like a car or a blow-drier. Film is an aesthetic work of art and a cultural product containing meaning and incorporating (moral) values and opinions. The protection of national film industries – exhibition and production – was often also dictated by the fear of cultural colonization by Hollywood. Not only economic terrain was under threat, national identity – however vague this concept is – was also felt to be at stake. This remains an important topic in Europe today.

This does not mean that we regard all other film histories as simply “a reaction to Hollywood” – French, British, and other European films were rooted in a different cultural past and therefore tackled different themes and had a distinctive look and style. European and other Western filmmakers had their own story to tell and did this in their own way, not necessarily to contend with Hollywood. When it came to economics, however, all these films had to compete with Hollywood, as it was simply the most powerful player on the Western market. This is why we consider the economics of films to be a very important aspect of the history of movies; economics is therefore an integral part of this book.

In this book, we aim to ask multiple questions about movie history. Economic, political, social, aesthetical,

technological factors determine what films are made, how they are made, how they are distributed, by whom they are seen and in what way they create meaning. Imagine a film as a six-sided cube and you get a picture of the complexity of film history.

In this book we will stick to four broad categories for thinking about film history, as follows:

- (1) Technological history: what equipment was available at a certain point in time?
- (2) Economic history: how did the movie business operate at the time?
- (3) Aesthetic history: what narrative forms, visual/auditory styles, and genres were used?
- (4) Social history: what was the place of movies in the society of the time?

The four approaches are very broad categories and it is possible to refine them to more specific ones. For example, social history includes political history: how did authorities and local leaders deal with movies? Therefore in practice these approaches are not strictly separated, but are mixed and used together.

When for example sound film was invented the aesthetics of films were influenced by this new technology. Camera movements became more difficult since sound had to be recorded at the same time. This meant that early sound films often had fewer camera movements and a slower pace than they had just before the invention of sound film. Studios had to be equipped in a different way too. At least some parts of the studios needed to be soundproof to not disturb the recording of a sound movie. The technical changes also affected acting. A new style of acting was required since dialogues now were spoken instead of written on intertitles. Many previously famous stars from the silent movies proved to have very heavy accents or terrible voices and lost their jobs in the transition to sound film.

Changes also needed to be made to film exhibition. Cinema owners needed to invest large sums of money to wire their cinemas but were not sure which sound system they should choose because of the ongoing patent war between the producers of sound technology equipment. Because of the huge economic interests, fierce battles were fought over who would own the patents for sound technology. Audiences were also suddenly confronted with talking stars who did not speak their language. In some European countries like the Netherlands, all this led to a short revival of ailing national film industries. As this example illustrates, the coming of sound was not simple a technical innovation but had aesthetic, economic and social consequences at the same time. In this book we will analyze how these different aspects were interwoven.

A SURVEY AND MORE

This book is designed to give an overview of 100 years of movie history, but we seek to do more than just tell you what we judged as being important parts of this history. We also try to give you a sense of the era that we are writing about with illustrations – most often taken from the movies themselves – to help you connect names to faces and images to film titles.

Secondly, we have followed a chronological order to make you aware of the broader historical context of the movie history we write about. In what kind of world did the filmmakers, the entrepreneurs and audiences we write about live in? Or, for example, how did World War II affect the trade in films around the world and what viewers could see?

A third feature is the use of the case study “boxes” through this book. These are not just a bunch of questions and arguments for their answers. Instead these aim to teach readers how to make their own movie histories. We use these boxes to make you aware of the *kind* of historical analysis that is used in a particular chapter.

REFERENCES, FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Since *Movie History: A Survey* is not filled with footnotes, the reader is asked to turn to the bibliography at the end of the book for sources which proved useful in writing the book. No historian of the cinema can do all the primary research for a survey history which covers millions of movies made and shown in different countries throughout the world. He or she must rely on the fine work of others. There are too many paper documents to read, too many movies to see. Like all writers of survey histories before us, we have integrated our own research and writings with what we consider their best writing in movie history as the twenty-first century began.

Each chapter has a “further reading” section at the end and the bibliography also lists books that we thought might be helpful to explore certain film historical topics in more depth. Finally we listed web addresses of the main film archives and of portals that offer access to film-related sources. All of this information is also available in the free online resource for the book at www.routledge.com/textbooks/moviehistory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this book has been a wonderful journey for two authors who had been friends for 20 years but who had never previously teamed up in their writing. We enjoyed all the benefits of writing as a team and considered ourselves fortunate to have such a co-author. We are very proud to present this book as a truly cooperative endeavor.

We could not have written this book without the knowledge, insights and analyses of our film historian colleagues whom we list in the bibliography at the end of the book. Adriaan Bijl, an expert on the history of Panavision, proved a most helpful resource.

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7 July 2010

Douglas Gomery, University of Maryland

Clara Pafort-Overduin, Utrecht University



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*Chapter 3 – Hollywood establishes the
Classical Narrative Style* 61



THE SILENT CINEMA 1895–1927

*Chapter 4 – Influential alternatives to
Hollywood: European cinema* 85

*Chapter 5 – Experiments in filmmaking:
The USSR* 111

FILM HISTORY

1860

1900

1861: Kinematoscope
1865: 1st vaudeville theater opens in USA
1877: Phonograph invented
1891: Dickinson demonstrates Kinetoscope and Kinetograph (camera)
1895: Lumière Brothers introduce Cinématograph to the public
1895: Earliest color hand-tinted films are publically released
1896: 1st ever filmed coronation (Nicholas II of Russia)
1897: 1st movie showings in Hong Kong & China

1908: Motion Picture Patents Company is formed (ends 1915).

FILM

1903: *The Great Train Robbery*

HISTORY

1898: Spanish-American War

1901: Queen Victoria dies
1901: President McKinley assassinated
1902: 2nd Boer War – 1899–1902
1906: Finland becomes the 1st European country to give women the vote
1908: Ford introduces Model-T

1910

1920

1910s: Golden Age of Swedish cinema

**1914: Charlie Chaplin 1st appears as
Little Tramp**

1916: Famous Players-Lasky established

**1919: Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks,
Mary Pickford, D. W. Griffith, & William S.
Hart form United Artists**

1920: Hollywood studio system established

**1921: Classical Hollywood Narrative
Style established**

1923–28: Height of Buster Keaton's career

**1927: Grauman's Chinese Theater opens in
Hollywood**

1915: *The Cheat*

1915: *The Birth of a Nation*

1919: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

1920: *The Kid*

1922: *Nosferatu*

1923: *Robin Hood*

1925: *Battleship Potemkin*

1925: *The Gold Rush*

1926: *Metropolis*

1927: *Sunrise*

1927: *Wings* (winner of 1st Academy Award)

1927: *The Jazz Singer*

1911: Chinese Revolution

1912: Titanic sinks

1914: World War I – 1914–18

1917: US enters WWI

1917: Russian Revolution

1920: Prohibition begins in the US

1920: Women granted the right to vote in US

1924: Surrealist Manifesto

1927: BBC founded



CHAPTER I

THE INVENTION AND INNOVATION OF MOTION PICTURES

Introduction

Leading up to motion pictures: The magic lantern

Thomas Alva Edison: US inventor

Innovating projection: The Lumière brothers

Patent wars and new strategies

Movie exhibition: Through vaudeville

Movie exhibition: Through fairs

Towards the nickelodeon

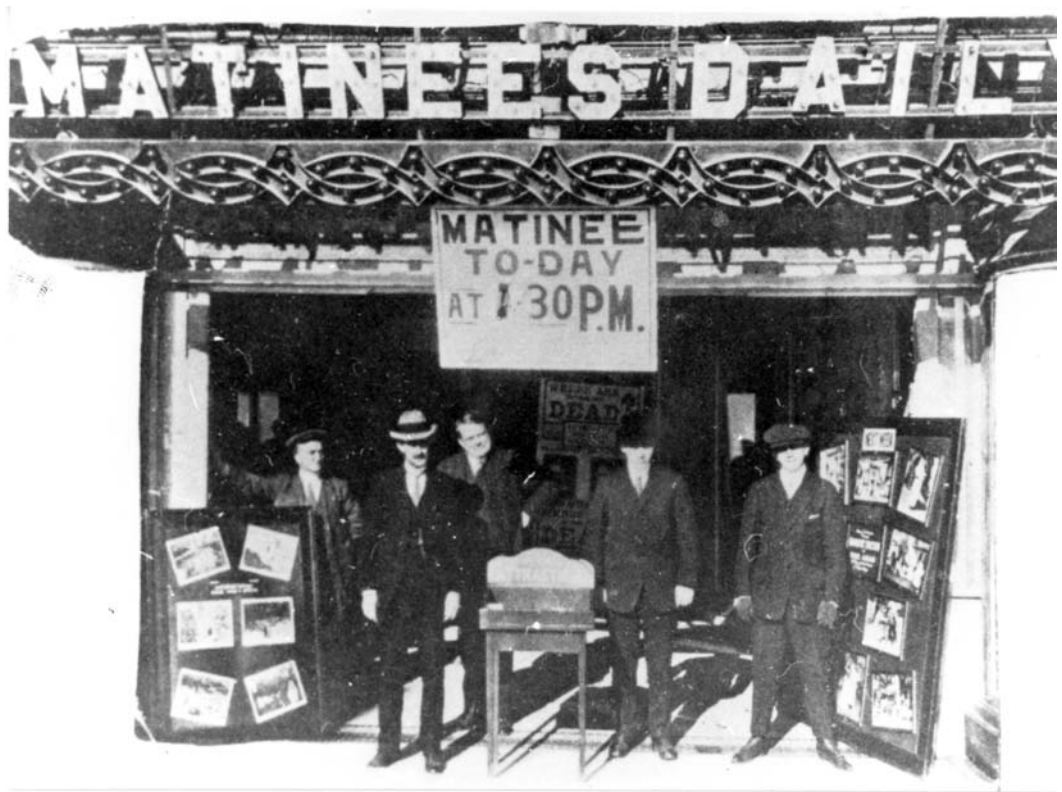
The “cinema of attractions”

Patent-free movies in the USA

Around the world

Film distribution model

Case study I: Who went to see early movies in the USA?



1.1 An early cinema.

Vaudeville theaters offered a selection of variety acts from singers to dancers, from comics to animal tricks. The first vaudeville theater in New York (USA) was the Bowery theater, opened in 1865 and aimed at a family audience. They became very popular and were called variety shows in music halls in Europe.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts by explaining how motion pictures came to be invented and how this technology spread around the world, focusing on the inventions and business strategies of two of the most influential inventors: Thomas Edison of the United States, and the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière of France. They created devices to record and then project movies – the essential elements for the industry to develop.

In the USA movies became part of the program of **vaudeville theaters**; in Europe they were spread through fairs. By 1910 theaters especially designed for the projection of movies had become the dominant place to show movies.

The first filmmakers sought for the best ways to capture images that would interest potential audiences. Scenes of everyday life, news subjects, travelogues, recorded theater performances were amongst the earliest subjects. Soon after that came comic narratives and dramatic stories. As examples of two important early filmmakers we examine the work of Edwin Porter from the USA and George Méliès from France.

In the last part of this chapter we analyze the foundations of the film industry in India. Even as a colony of Great Britain, natives of India fashioned their own films often based on mythical dramas. They were not aimed for export, but for distribution to their own people.

Early films were distributed around the world. Before **World War I** (1914–1918) films were traded on the open market by the foot or meter.

The First World War – in its time called the Great War – started in 1914 and ended in 1918. It involved many of the great powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey called the Centralists; and France, Great Britain, Russia, Japan, Italy, US, Serbia, Montenegro, Belgium, Romania, Portugal, Greece and others called the Allies. Modern war techniques caused an unprecedented number of deaths (estimates run between 10,000,000 and 15,000,000) and casualties (more than 20,000,000). Another “novelty” was the use of propaganda to engage the heart and minds of the people.

The French company Pathé provided a model for film distribution by sending representatives to sell equipment and films where none existed. But Pathé lost its advantage due to the First World War, and thereafter Hollywood – led by Adolph Zukor – began its takeover of the world market.

In the beginning, the movies were simply just another technological marvel. Through the decade of the 1890s into the early days of the twentieth century, inventors worked with the first filmmakers and exhibitors to convince a skeptical public to attend a show with movies. In the process these inventor/entrepreneurs set the stage for a social, economic, and cultural change which would fundamentally alter the world.

To study the introduction of this new technology, one must acknowledge that the movies became a business in which inventors became entrepreneurs to make money with their new inventions in the USA. But inventors did not operate in a vacuum during the last decade of the nineteenth century, seeking to create some ideal new enterprise. Rather, they sought to sell their discoveries to some existing entertainment industry, be it vaudeville, theater, or the **phonograph** model.

Phonograph means literally sound (phono) writer (graph). In 1877 Thomas Edison invented the first phonograph that could record and play back sound. Initially, it was used in offices as a kind of mechanical secretary but soon it became used in many other ways, including talking dolls, music recordings, speech recordings, accompaniment of magic lantern shows and early movies.

First, the necessary new apparatus had to be created. For cinema this meant a camera to record images, and a printer to transfer them to the film strip. (Once vaudeville and theater proved to be the most popular models, a projector was needed to show movies to large groups of people.) In the beginning, Edison created a peep-show apparatus where one person paid to watch a film; but he abandoned this quickly for a theatrical audience business model.

There is no law which dictates that necessary inventions need to be restricted to just one purpose. Many times people create new knowledge for one goal, and then it becomes used for quite another; for example, computers in the 1960s did only calculations but by the 1990s computers were used primarily for writing. And frequently entrepreneurs do not recognize the range of purposes even once the new invention is available (for example, **wide-screen** movies were available decades before they became commonplace in the 1950s).

A second step occurs when this apparatus is taken to the marketplace, that is, it is innovated. For the movies this meant a set of marketing strategies by which to convince the public to part with its money.

Wide-screen refers to the format of the film strip, the so-called “aspect ratio” meaning the relation between the height and the length of one frame. The standard aspect ratio is 1.33:1. When the aspect ratio is higher than 1.33:1 it is called wide-screen.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Risk and timing weigh heavily on the prospective innovator. Will waiting help? Should one try to be first or learn from the mistakes of others? What will potential competitors do? The process of innovation is one of juggling new information with projected and real costs, with the demands of the potential audience. It took time to find ways to use the new motion pictures at low enough costs to please audiences of the day.

Finally, once the innovation has been established, it takes time to convince the rest of the world to adopt it. Indeed, it took more than ten years for cinema to become a mass leisure time activity. Many would try, but not until the 1910s would Hollywood convince the world that cinema could become a mass art form, not simply a passing fad. The diffusion of the technology was accomplished when the movies became an industry of influential, profitable enterprises.

This chapter charts the invention, innovation, and diffusion of the movies – starting with its predecessor the magic lantern in the late nineteenth century. The magic lantern was the precursor to motion pictures and showed how entrepreneurs brought the new movie-making and exhibition technology to a mass audience.

LEADING UP TO MOTION PICTURES: THE MAGIC LANTERN

Motion pictures did not just start one day. Long before it was possible to let pictures move, people tried to create the *illusion* of movement. This proved possible with slide shows created by magic lanterns – functioning as early slide projectors. During the nineteenth century, magic lantern shows entertained people at gatherings as entrepreneurs sought to entertain groups with images of the far-away world. This was considered a technological marvel.

The development of the magic lantern started in Europe in the seventeenth century as oil lamps lighted up glass on which images had been drawn and then were beamed onto white walls. Several magic lanterns could be used at the same time to smooth the transition from one slide to another and made crude motion seem possible. Around 1850 projectors were made with two or even three lenses above each other to create this effect. The slides were painted or etched and were very sophisticated and colorful.

Magic lantern exhibitors traveled the world, but in the late nineteenth century Europe was the center of this form of entertainment. Behind a large screen several people (known as lanternists) would change the slides and move the lanterns. (When moving towards the screen an object seemed to come closer to the public so the illusion of movement was created.) Around 1840 photographic images were innovated into magic lantern shows. These photographic images proved much more realistic than their painted predecessors. It now was possible to capture and show a landscape of a foreign country or a far-away city. Illustrated lectures on travels became very popular.

The level of sophistication of the theatrical magic lantern shows pushed the level of the illusion of

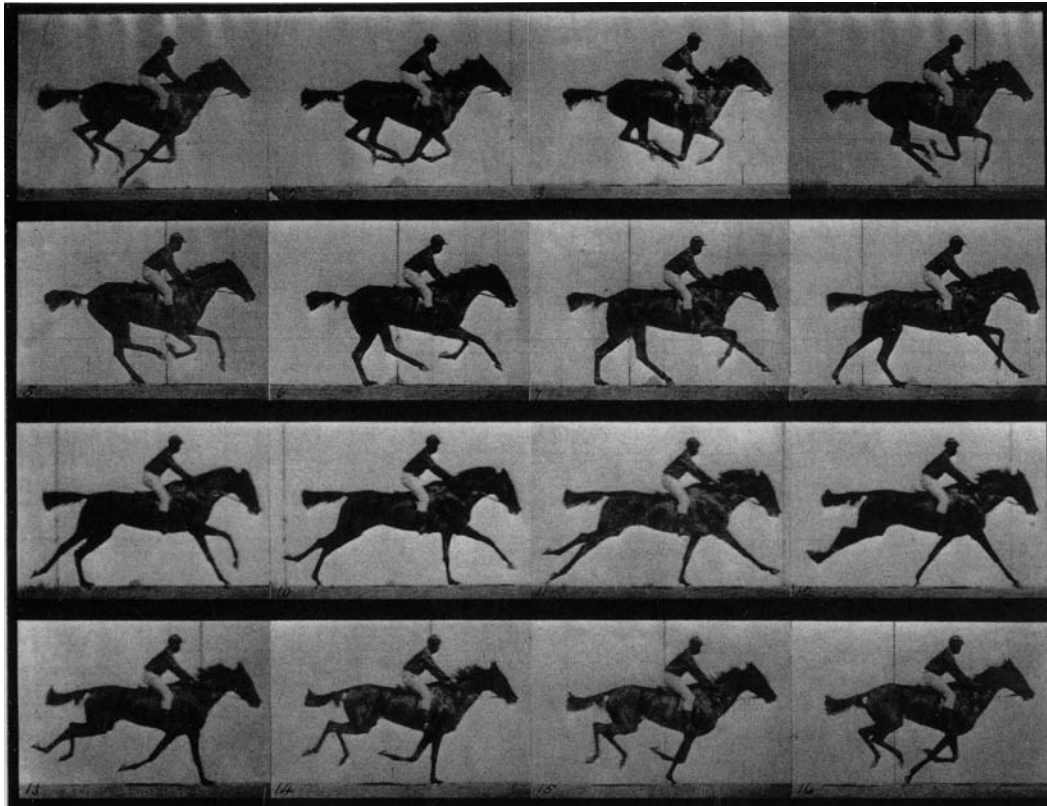


1.2 Magic lantern.

THE INVENTION AND INNOVATION OF MOTION PICTURES

movement. American photographers and lanternists took – and later projected – photographs of actors and actresses rapidly taken one after the other. In 1861 Coleman Sellers patented a special magic lantern called the **kinematoscope**. In the late 1870s Eadweard Muybridge, an American photographer, succeeded in making a series of photographs that captured the movement of horses. He did this with a battery of cameras activated by threads to trip the shutters stretched across the track, coupled with a neutral white background. Each camera captured part of the galloping movement; placing them one after another showed how the horse galloped.

The kinematoscope showed movement through a succession of images shown as a recurring series in a drum-like instrument. It was never marketed commercially but the technique was used in further experiments with moving images.



1.3 *The Horse in Motion*, Eadweard Muybridge, 1878.

But still these were individual images, so in 1882, when Frenchman Etienne-Jules Marey invented a camera that recorded 12 separate images on the edge of a revolving disc of film he seemed to have made a major breakthrough. Six years later he built the first camera to use a long strip of flexible film, this time on a paper base. By 1889 the pioneering photography company in the USA, Eastman Kodak of Rochester, New York, introduced a flexible film base for photography. This malleable base allowed the creation of a lengthy continuous set of frames and recording motion became possible. This would be the basis for the movie camera and projector.

With this base, scientists began to work to invent movie cameras and projectors: Thomas Edison and Thomas Armat in the USA; Etienne-Jules Marey, Louis Le Prince, and Louis and Auguste Lumière in France; Ottomar Anschutz, Max Skladanowsky and Oskar Messter in Germany; and William Friese-Greene and Robert Paul in Great Britain.

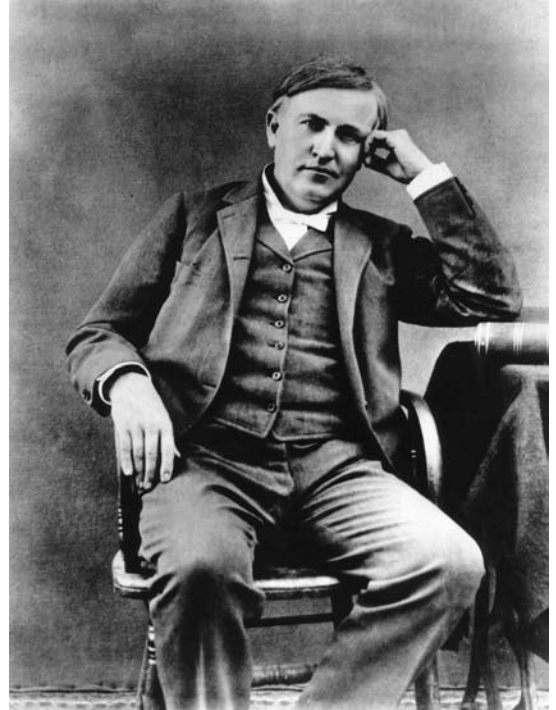
MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Two inventors sought to market this new technology and proved so successful that in time they spread their movie cameras and projectors around the world: Thomas Edison of the USA, and the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière of France.

THOMAS ALVA EDISON: US INVENTOR

Through the latter half of the nineteenth century the famous US inventor Thomas Edison sought to invent a movie camera – just one of a number of inventions. Edison's success in creating recordings of movement was analogous to his creation of the phonograph to record sounds. Instead of the office tool Edison envisioned, the phonograph became used to record and play back music. Edison thought his moving pictures would become primarily tools for scientists, but instead his inventions became the movies for mass entertainment.

So Thomas Edison – in his large complex for inventions in New Jersey, assigned William K. L. Dickson to seek a commercial use for a “phonograph of moving images.” A breakthrough came after Edison met the Frenchman Etienne-Jules Marey – in Paris – who was working on a continuous photographic film strip. Edison saw the possibilities of this system and in October 1890 Dickson started working on an apparatus that functioned as a film strip to record moving images – a movie camera.



1.4 Thomas Edison.

George Eastman's development of the celluloid-based photographic film provided Dickson with new possibilities and on 20 May 1891 the first kinetoscope was demonstrated.

George Eastman (1854–1932) was the founder of the Eastman Kodak Company and the inventor of roll film. As an amateur photographer, Eastman became annoyed by the heavy weight of the camera and glass plates that were available at the time, and so started working on a paper roll film that he later perfected as a transparent flexible film. In 1888 he introduced the Kodak camera and in 1892 he established the Eastman Kodak Company. Eastman was also known for his generosity and was engaged in many philanthropic projects.

This kinetoscope used a film strip and one person at a time could peep through the hole and watch the moving images of a man removing his hat and taking a bow. From June 1891 Edison's employees prepared

the papers on a patent application for two apparatuses: the kinetograph (the camera) and the kinetoscope (the peephole viewer – not a projector).

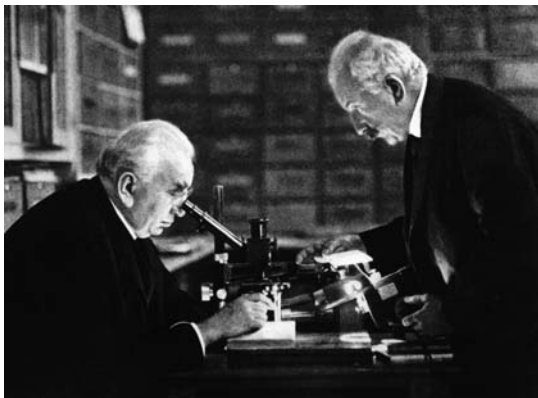
To be able to sell his kinetoscope, images were needed and in 1893 Edison's movie-production studio the Black Maria was built, for the purpose of making films for the kinetoscope. (Widely referred to as "America's first movie studio," Black Maria was slang for the petrol wagon it resembled, due to its tar-paper lining.) The roof opened to adjust the light, and the film was exposed. By 1894 Edison's company had created 75 motion pictures in the Black Maria. Dickson chose entertainers who could be persuaded to journey across the Hudson River to the New Jersey studio: Broadway stars, vaudeville performers, trained animal acts, dancers, and comics. Early film titles included *The Gaiety Girls Dancing*, *Trained Bears*, and *Highland Dance*.

So, on 14 April 1894, supplied by Edison, the Holland Brothers opened the first commercial kinetoscope parlor with ten machines, each showing a different short movie. The 50-foot loops of film moved through the machine in less than a half minute. Patrons paid 25 cents (later falling to a nickel) to watch a short film. Soon other entrepreneurs opened kinetoscope parlors across the USA. The shorts were produced exclusively by the Edison Company and sold for \$10 dollars per print.



1.5 Early kinetoscope parlor.

INNOVATING PROJECTION: THE LUMIÈRE BROTHERS



1.6 Louis and Auguste Lumière.

graphic equipment. After a thorough study of Edison machines, the Lumières constructed their own version of a camera, and a projector. In December 1895 the brothers Lumière publicly introduced their Cinématographe by projecting ten short motion pictures on a screen in the basement of the Grand Café in Paris.

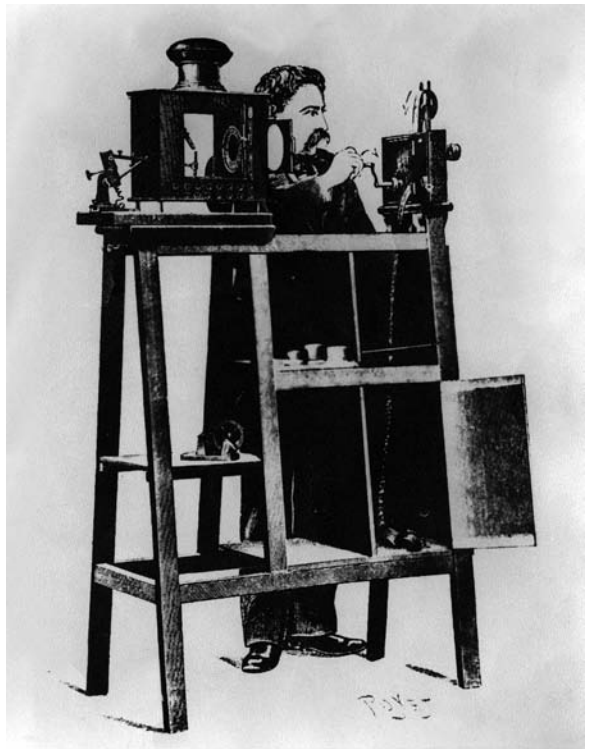
Vaudeville entrepreneurs conceived a theatrical model for movies. With a projector they could show films on a large screen for a gathered audience. This variety show model had been conceived in France by the Lumière brothers who were more rooted in the magic lantern tradition that flourished in Europe. They logically started to project their moving images for crowds from the beginning. Where Edison concentrated on the camera, these French brothers put their inventive efforts into a projector – as did other Europeans. The Lumière brothers of Lyon (France), Louis and Auguste, operated a factory which manufactured photo-

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

The Lumières' 16-pound hand-cranked Cinématographe (versus Edison's 500-pound apparatus) permitted ease of camera movement and placement. The Lumières could take their camera to the world. And since their camera was hand-cranked, films could be made and shown at speeds which varied from 14 to 24 frames per second. (Only with the coming of sound was film speed standardized at 24 frames per second.)

The first Lumière films were simple, and usually consisted of only a single shot. The Lumières took their lightweight, manually operated cameras to the parks, gardens and any number of other public places in and around France to record everyday activities and, when possible, important events of the day. (Since Edison's camera was motor driven, it required an electrical power supply, hence his Black Maria.) The titles of the Lumière films reflected the novelty of the new marvel of motion pictures. This can be appreciated by their titles: *Arrival of a Train at a Station*

(*Arrivée d'un train*, 1896) and *Workers Leaving the Factory* (*Sortie d'usine*, 1896). These two movie-making practices – the Lumières' recording of actual events and Edison's films of entertainment figures – would from the beginning define the principal forms of movie making.



1.7 Original Lumière camera.



1.8 Card Party (Lumière 1896). Hand-colored.



1.9 Workers Leaving the Factory (Lumière, 1896).

The fame of the Lumières' Cinématographe screenings soon reached the USA, and caused Edison to adapt his movie-making strategy. To first market his kinetoscope, Edison worked with two businessmen Norman Raff and Frank Gammon and had granted them the exclusive rights to sell his peeping show apparatus. But Raff and Gammon wanted to copy the theatrical model of the Lumière films and pushed Edison to develop a portable, non-electric camera, which he did. Yet the flaw was not the equipment, but the peep-show business model. As more and more theaters contracted to purchase movies from others, Edison dissolved this agreement and copied the Lumière theatrical model.

PATENT WARS AND NEW STRATEGIES

Edison sold his films to vaudeville theater owners to fill one act of the variety show, trying to find the right business model. It was too easy to duplicate a film and this was done frequently, lowering potential profits. Since films were sold in measurements, by feet and were not copyrighted, Edison could not stop entrepreneurs from copying and selling Edison-made movies.

And other producers used Edison equipment. Producers such as Philadelphia's Sigmund Lubin and New York's American Mutoscope & Biograph Company (usually simply Biograph), plus foreign imports (from companies including Lumière of France, among others), flooded the American market. As more and more films became available, having a direct relationship with Edison proved irrelevant and unnecessary.

In response Edison went to court to try to curtail all production of movies in the USA, since, as his lawyers argued, he controlled the necessary patents. Unfortunately for Edison, exhibitors throughout the country were able to easily acquire films from abroad; all his suit did in the short run was to increase the flood of foreign films into the USA.

In 1900 Edison signed Edwin S. Porter to improve his equipment, and at the same time to open a new studio. In October 1900, the Edison Company began building a studio in New York City on East 21st Street. From such a base he had access to the best vaudeville talent. Production at the new studio commenced in February 1901 and Edwin S. Porter was now appointed as a cameraman and would become one of the most important early filmmakers.

Near the end of 1901, as the Edison studio was beginning to regularly turn out films, Edison's lawyers won an important victory which upheld the Edison Company's patent position. Temporarily, Sigmund Lubin, a competitor, left for Germany, and Vitagraph, another competitor, stopped making films and reverted back to its original exhibition business. Edison seemed in control of movie making in the USA. Taking advantage of its position, the Edison Company pursued an extremely conservative policy, concentrating on news films and topical attractions. Now Edison's movie inventions were making money.

Edison kept the industry in a steady position, but his monopoly was short-lived. In March of 1902, a higher court reversed the favorable 1901 decision, and Edison's heyday was doomed. So, a new era in movie making started: telling short stories. Edison's ace filmmaker, Edwin S. Porter, made a tale of rescue, *Life of an American Fireman*, and a western, *The Great Train Robbery*, both released in 1903, the year following Edison's defeat for a patent in the courts.

Across the Atlantic, in France, the Lumière brothers had sufficient capital and managerial skill to market their new apparatus, the Cinématographe, with considerable success, around the world. But their main interest was manufacturing and selling cameras and projectors, not film production. Indeed, by 1905 the Lumières were out of the movie-making business altogether.

Seeing an open market, Pathé-Frères (*frère* means 'brother' in French), led by Charles and Emile Pathé, were showmen at fairs where in 1895 they first set up a booth to exploit Edison's phonograph and kinetoscope. Soon, Pathé-Frères developed their own apparatus and, with the help of large investments from Claude Givrolas, they hired Pierre-Victoire Continsouza and Henri René Bünzli to work on a camera and projector.

While working on the improvement of the camera and projector the Pathé-Frères saw that films were the key to the attraction. In 1902 Pathé built a glass studio. Ferdinand Zecca, a café-concert artist who had been making sound recordings for Pathé-Frères, was made head of film production. Pathé-Frères boomed,

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

and in 1904 opened a second studio which a year later was producing 12,000 meters (more than 39,370 feet) of positive film stock per day – the vast majority of which were short story films. A year later, film production had tripled and the movie-making division was employing 1,200 people.

Unlike Edison who tried to guard his patent power in the USA, Pathé-Frères expanded around the world. Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, reports filtered back from the Middle East and China that Pathé had established markets for the movies where none had existed before. Pathé opened offices in London, New York, Moscow, Brussels, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Milan, Budapest, Warsaw, Calcutta, and Singapore.

MOVIE EXHIBITION: THROUGH VAUDEVILLE

In the USA vaudeville entrepreneurs provided a permanent home for showing movies. Indeed, when the new movie technology first became available in 1894, vaudeville theaters could be found in any town with more than 1,000 people. It stood at the apex of commercialized popular entertainment – offering a variety of acts. Edison and the Lumière movies all made their debuts in New York City vaudeville theaters during the 1896–1897 September to May season as one 15-minute act among eight others on the bill. Until the explosive growth of the nickelodeon in 1906, US vaudeville theaters provided the fledgling movie industry with regular access to potential patrons.



1.10 Grand Theater in Buffalo, New York, c. 1910.

Vaudeville theaters catered to middle-class audiences. Their variety bills aimed to please as many patrons as possible – with Irish tenors, trained seals, inspirational poetry readings, troops of acrobats, pairs of comics, professors with magic lantern slides, and “playlets” of condensed versions of popular dramatic hits from Broadway. Owners and managers of vaudeville houses simply substituted movies for their traditional magic lantern act.

One reason middle-class folks flocked to vaudeville during the 1890s came from the fine theaters whose architecture and interior design became the leading venues in most towns in the USA. So with the opening of Proctor’s Pleasure Palace on Labor Day of 1895 in New York City, patrons were pampered with a large auditorium, a roof garden, a German café, and a barber shop, with a Turkish bath and both flower and booksellers in the basement. Once they had paid their admission, patrons could enjoy a continuous show in the main auditorium (10 in the morning until midnight) or make use of some other part of Proctor’s offerings.

The 1890s saw the building of two major chains of vaudeville theaters in the USA: B. F. Keith’s in major cities in the eastern part of the USA, and the Orpheum circuit west of the Mississippi. But competition proved fierce in New York City, then the largest city in the USA. B. F. Keith’s looked for any new attraction and the new movies filled the bill. During the 1895–1896 season, vaudeville’s newest act was the movies.

By the end of the 1896–1897 vaudeville season, the pattern for commercial exhibition of movies as a vaudeville act had been established – which would endure for a decade. Movies were best known to patrons as vaudeville acts until the rise of the movie-only nickelodeon craze which flooded the USA in 1906, one-fifth the price of vaudeville admissions.

MOVIE EXHIBITION: THROUGH FAIRS

In Europe the early movies found their way to the audiences in a different way than they did in the USA. Fairgrounds proved key. Throughout Europe, fairs were held according to a festival calendar determined by religious (before Lent), agricultural (harvest feasts), or national celebrations (such as the birthday of the Queen in Holland for example).

This was a cultural difference from the USA where fairs were restricted to autumn. So, for example, in Great Britain in 1900 there were 200 weekly fairs held year round. Only in the colder climates of Scandinavian countries did fairs play a lesser role. By 1904 the tents in which the movies were shown as part of fairs became increasingly large and lavishly decorated. Claims were made that some tents could accommodate up to 1,000 customers. An important way of attracting audiences was the grand organ positioned outside the tent. The loud music coming from that could not be easily missed.



1.11 Green's Cinematograph. Filmed during the Whitsuntide Fair in Preston, 1906. The film was shown the same evening to the audience now being filmed.

The showing of pictures was not just restricted to the fairgrounds. Just outside, **itinerant showmen** projected movies in rented spaces like small cafés, or larger town halls. These showmen could have visited a town any time during the year, but chose the time people were on holiday attending the fair.

Itinerant showmen traveled from town to town to show their movies at fairs, community centres, cafés, churches, and opera houses. During the summer they often set up in town centers.

TOWARDS THE NICKELODEON

Right after the introduction of movies, entrepreneurs sought to open permanent theaters with motion pictures as the sole attraction. As early as 1896–1897 such an establishment was opened in Berlin, Germany, but closed down after a few months. There were also early attempts in Denmark and Spain, but overall the real beginning of permanent theaters dates from 1904–1905 onwards. In 1905 in Berlin and Hamburg, Germany, shop owners converted their stores into theaters showing only movies. In 1906 new movie theaters were opened for the public all over Germany. These small movie theaters could be found in former shops with a seating capacity of 200 and came to be known as “ladenkinos” [literally “shop for cinema” in German] or “nickelodeons” [a nickel is five cents and “Odeon” is a roofed theater from the Greek].

Depending on the culture, cheap movie-only cinemas came about from 1904 to 1908. So, for example in Great Britain where fairs were so important, only after 1908 did the movie show move into a former shop. Safety regulation was an important factor in this. In 1909, a new law, the Cinematograph Act, introduced a licensing system that caused many traveling shows to close down. In 1909 the first permanent theaters were established, and their numbers increased rapidly; by the end of 1910 nearly 3,000 permanent low-cost cinemas could be counted.



1.12 Ladenkino, the German version of the Nickelodeon, c. 1903. The sign reads: “Living Pictures.”

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

The nickelodeon was a small, uncomfortable, makeshift theater, usually a converted cigar store, pawnshop, or restaurant made over to look like a vaudeville theater. Out front were large hand-painted posters announcing the movies for the day; there were very few advertisements in newspapers or reviews to guide potential patrons.

Inside one found a bare screening room, long and narrow and holding between 50 and 300 people. There were wooden chairs, with no stages. The screen was simply attached to the back wall. A piano accompanied the silent films, but in the better establishments, there might be a violinist and other musicians (up to a total of four in most towns and cities). The screen was typically 12 by 9 feet. The projection booth was set off in the rear, due to increasing concerns about fires from flammable nitrate film stock, and new laws requiring a separate projection booth. (Motion picture film stock remained highly flammable until “safety” film was innovated in the 1950s.) A show consisted of a number of news, documentary, comedy, fantasy, and dramatic shorts lasting about one hour.

As the nickelodeon movement in the USA began in earnest, its rise in popularity grew rapidly. In 1904 there were only a handful; the vaudeville remained the mainstay of film exhibition. By October 1906 there were more than 100 in Chicago alone; a year later the figure in the USA topped 2,000; by 1910 some placed the number over 10,000. One estimate claimed some 26 million people attended each week in 1910, fully one-fifth of the adult population in the USA. Gross receipts reached into the millions of dollars.

The nickelodeon business was an easy one to enter. The experiences of the brothers Warner, Adolph Zukor (later head of Paramount), and Marcus Loew (later owner of MGM) testified, over and over again, to the need for only a few thousand dollars in capital to invest, little training, and no special connections. These men were later to gain ever more prominence in the burgeoning industry. Laws existed only to prevent highly flammable nitrate film from exploding into fire. There were no unions, rules, or regulations. The early days of the movie business proved a golden opportunity for anyone who wanted to take a chance.

By 1908, the nickelodeon had replaced the vaudeville theater as the primary outlet for movie presentation in the



1.13 Nickelodeon, c. 1910.

United States, but low-cost vaudeville theaters continued to show movies as one of their regular acts. “Nickel madness” rode a wave of economic prosperity, both for the nation as a whole and the entertainment business in particular. With ticket prices so low, it is not surprising to learn that early devotees of the nickelodeon came from the poorer folks in a city or town.

But the nickelodeon era lasted only five years; as movies became so popular, owners abandoned converted store fronts for theaters with separate lobbies, grand architecture, stages, and permanent seats. Their model was the legitimate theater. This transformation coincided with the introduction of longer (so-called feature) films.

Early movie-only theaters added vaudeville acts to differentiate their shows from the ones down the street. This was the rise of what has been called “small-time vaudeville.” By moving their nickelodeon operations into their own theaters, movie exhibitors could have a stage and offer live acts as well as movies. But these were movie theaters first and foremost, with vaudeville acts added, not vaudeville theaters with movies added which had been the case before 1905. With this new wave of low cost theaters, the “nickel”odeon era ended as small-time vaudeville charged 10 cents, then 25 cents and, for early feature films, 50 cents.

This increase in admission fees meant a change in the movie audience. In the short span of the nickelodeon craze (1906 to 1910) moviegoers were not rich folks. But theater owners did not want to count on the poor and working class as their basic audience. Middle-class Americans had more time and money, and thus attended more often and were willing to pay the higher prices. New theater owners catered to the middle class and drew them away from higher cost chain vaudeville entertainment.

Filmmakers began to draw on respected authors such as Emile Zola, Edgar Allan Poe, Victor Hugo, and William Shakespeare for inspiration. These works were free of copyright costs, and signaled social respectability. There was no longer any fear that the movie show was some sort of fad or passing phenomena. By 1910 the movie show, in more and more beautiful theaters, now represented an accepted part of the matrix of American show business. The pure nickelodeon disappeared by 1920.

But the nickelodeon had provided the platform which seduced a nation of moviegoers. This initial home for movies was recalled years later with a nostalgic innocence celebrating a populist shrine always found recreated in a corner of a museum with old train engines and other artifacts from “the turn of century.” The nickelodeon also established the careers of many of Hollywood’s founders. William Fox [of Twentieth Century-Fox studio], for example, began with a Brooklyn nickelodeon in 1906 and by 1910 he was operating 14 small-time vaudeville/movie shows in the environs of New York City.

THE “CINEMA OF ATTRACTIONS”

Historians call these early motion pictures – made between 1895 and 1906 – “cinema of attractions,” which refers to the way the spectators were entertained. There were no stories but an audience member became caught up through a discontinuous collection of the moving images. This does not mean that no story-telling occurred in this period, but it was not the dominant mode.

One of the attractions was pictures of the audience itself. To see oneself, or other people one knew, projected on a screen proved appealing. So, for example, the Biograph Company continued the Lumières’ practice of filming local activities. Audiences in city after city saw images of their own home towns through films of local sporting teams, new buildings going up, or maneuvers of the fire department.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Travelogues or travel films were designed to entertain and educate audiences with short films of unknown parts of the world. Topics could range from the Niagara Falls and train rides through the Western USA to moving images of exotic lands and famous sights such as the Eiffel Tower.

More exotic were travel films, in the tradition of the magic lantern show, which presented moving pictures of faraway places no one in the pre-jet airplane world could or would ever travel to. The **travelogues** were an important part of many early cinema shows and became a distinct genre between 1905 and 1906.

A variant on this form was the news film. Especially in Germany, news films proved popular and gave the vaudeville cinema the name of “optical reporter”. Already in 1897, Oskar Messter, a German film pioneer, produced his often local news films almost as quickly as the newspapers could write their articles. In 1906, when longer films were already common, Messter still produced short news films and made a lot of money.

The clearest indication of the popularity of the movies in the USA came during the first war recorded on film – the **1898 war between Spain and the USA**.



1.14 Sheffield United vs Bury football match, 1902. Mitchell and Kenyon Collection.

In 1898 a USA ship was blown up in a Cuban port – 90 miles from the USA. With the alleged provocation, the USA went to war with Spain, the nation that controlled Cuba and the Philippines. The USA backed the revolting Cubans who fought for independence. The US Navy overpowered Spain and the war lasted only a couple of months, from April until July 1898.

Citizen Kane tells the fictionalized story of the life and death of William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951), an influential newspaper tycoon, as well as other tycoons in the USA (discussed later, in Chapter 7).

Between April and December 1898, the mass media of the day – newspapers and magazines – subjected the public to a constant barrage of public invective. Newspapers owned by William Randolph Hearst [as parodied in Orson Welles’ 1941 feature film *Citizen Kane*] ran story after story about the supposed Spanish repression of Cuba. On 15 February 1898, the United States Navy’s battleship *Maine* was sunk while it was anchored in Havana’s harbor; within two months the United States and Spain were at war.

New filmmakers entered the industry to take advantage of the interest in motion pictures of the war between Spain and the USA. For, example, J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith became rivals to Edison and created their own vaudeville movie “acts.” At first in 1898, Smith and Blackton took advantage of the best available war footage and integrated it into their vaudeville act. Later, Vitagraph went into production so Blackton and Smith could differentiate their product from what Edison and others were offering. In May 1898, using a modified Edison camera, they filmed *The Battle of Manila Bay* on a table with careful manipulation of photographs of ships and battle scenes amid flashes of gunpowder and fireworks. Blackton and Smith also recorded the New York Naval Parade in August 1898.

Filmmakers recorded images of all number of war-related activities. They even re-created battles using toy ships in bathtubs of water. These movies became so identified with “news” of the Spanish-American War that Edison renamed his projector the “Wargraph.” Fully one-third of all the movies made in the US during 1898 and 1899 were news films, principally of the various Spanish-American war activities.

If war films sparked the early interest in seeing movies in vaudeville theaters, their very nature posed an essential problem. No one could count on or predict when war or news of urgent interest would happen.

These war movies proved highly successful vaudeville acts when a war was on, but otherwise they cost too much relative to their limited popularity. Since vaudeville theaters had long featured live comics, movies of comics became a staple of variety shows.

Vaudeville theater owners saw that crowds loved the magical trick films of George Méliès which began to appear in the United States during 1902 with *Little Red Riding Hood* (*Le petit chaperon rouge*, 1901) and *A Trip to the Moon* (*Voyage dans la lune*, 1902). Magicians had long been a vaudeville staple, and Méliès integrated spectacular magic effects into familiar narratives. Méliès proved well-known fictional works could be created in regular, low-cost, predictable fashion and vaudeville chains reported their success at drawing middle-class crowds.

Méliès inspired vaudeville entrepreneurs to seek new forms of movies to show. So, as the movie and vaudeville industries moved into the twentieth century, they turned to classic genres of popular literature and stage plays. At first they made more and more comic films. These comic narratives on film became staples of the USA's vaudeville theaters by the 1902–1903 entertainment season (September to May).



1.15 Edwin S. Porter.

For the Edison Company, Edwin S. Porter created *Terrible Teddy, the Grizzly* (1901) that parodied the then vice-president-elect Theodore Roosevelt. His *The Finish of Bridget McKeen* (1901) presented a two-shot comedy in which Porter **dissolved** from one shot to another to provide the necessary continuity for the joke. These and other early films share a common style. The first shots are self-contained presentations, constructed like single-shot films so common in this period. The significant difference is the addition of the tag, a short fragment which could stand alone but commented on the earlier shot. There is no continuity linkage yet; in some cases a live narrator standing beside the screen helped stitch the story together.

A dissolve overlays two shots: one shot fades out and a second shot fades in at the same time.

Through 1901 and 1902 Edwin S. Porter continued to experiment with comic, vaudeville-oriented films. In 1902, Porter began several notable experiments: *Appointment by Telephone* (1902), *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902), and *How They Do Things in the Bowery* (1902). For example, *Appointment by Telephone* is a three-shot, short film which tells of a wife confronting her husband who is going out to enjoy himself. It makes use of interior and exterior spatial relationships, creating a fictional world. The ten-shot *Jack and the Beanstalk* took Porter six weeks to make and anticipated many of the eventual story-telling motion picture devices so celebrated in *Life of an American Fireman*. This film was certainly not the first to tell a story, but one of the first to make the story tightly structured. The exhibitor, who until then had an important role explaining to the audience what happened, was now reduced to a simple programmer.

The next season, movie makers turned to dramatic stories, and some dramatic films proved exceptionally popular. When Edwin S. Porter's "rescue drama" – *Life of an American Fireman* – was initially presented at Keith's vaudeville theater in Boston during the summer of 1903, it proved a major hit. In December 1903 Edison followed this up with a western, Edwin Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*. This western offered just a first step toward story-telling movies, as it consisted of 14 single shots crafted into a 12-minute robbery tale well known from pulp fiction of the day. But *The Great Train Robbery* proved so popular that Edison in 1905 parodied it with *The Little Train Robbery*.



1.16 *Life of an American Fireman* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903).

In these early years of movie making, New York City, as the mecca for vaudeville entertainment, became the center for film production. Most studios, in former warehouses or stores, were located near Union Square on 14th Street in lower Manhattan. But New York City itself offered a multitude of possible locations, from slums to the homes of the upper class, from urban parks to beaches beside the ocean. When it became necessary to go on location to film a western, unsettled New Jersey provided usable locations.

With the pioneering story films, movie makers took on more complex stories. From 1895 to 1905 the average motion picture moved from a single shot to more and more shots. Méliès inspired filmmakers to use the power of editing as he had to create his magic tricks. Méliès had many large objects seemingly disappear as he cut from a shot of the object to a second shot of an empty space. His early films were considered magic as well as humorous possibilities of magical discontinuity so familiar in vaudeville routines.

Narratives of complex continuity came through early chase films. The end of one shot was signaled by characters leaving the frame, and cut to the next shot inaugurated by the same characters' reappearance. Thus characters could chase each other for comic effect or take trips for



1.17 *Excelsior! Prince of Magicians* (George Méliès 1901). Méliès conjures up water.

dramatic effect [Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon*]. By 1904, comic chase films made the continuity structure a widespread practice, with the popularity of Biograph's *The Maniac Chase* (1904). Hundreds of imitators followed creating any number of situations in which characters could be motivated to chase after each other in comic fashion.



1.18 *A Trip to the Moon* (Segundo de Chomon, 1908). Stencil-colored imitation of Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* by Segundo de Chomon. Segundo was hired by Pathé to imitate the trick films of Méliès.

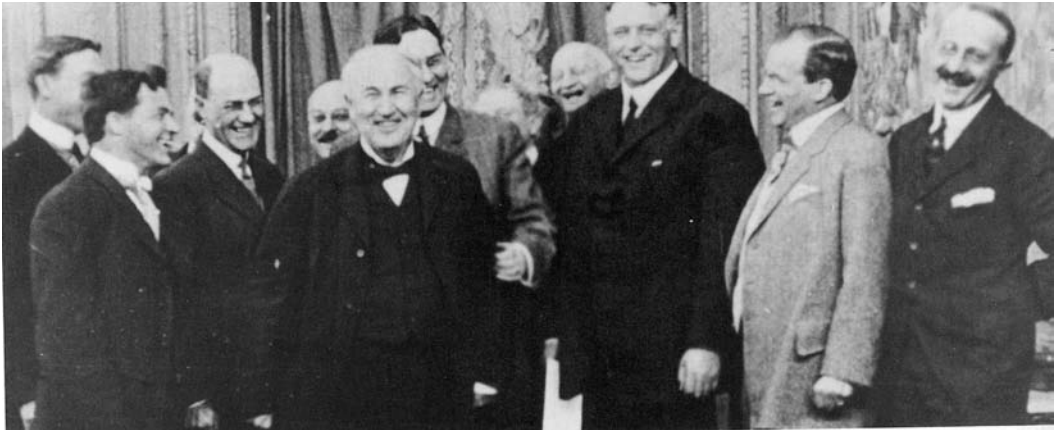
The Biograph Company commenced making longer entertainment films in 1903 when *The American Soldier in Love and War* (1903) came in three parts, *Kit Carson* (1903) in 13 parts, and *The Pioneers* (1903) in six parts. The latter two were made on location in New York state's Adirondack Mountains. These were Biograph's entries in the year that Edison's Edwin S. Porter made *Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery*. In 1904 Biograph continued with longer films, up to one reel. Fewer titles were released, but more time and money were allocated to production budgets. For example, Biograph sent cameraman William Bitzer to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

Biograph made longer and longer fictional works to appeal to vaudeville audiences. More films were shot indoors where lighting and stage conditions could be more easily controlled. These type of production conditions would set the industry standard in New York City until the move to California in 1914.

Established in 1916, Famous Players-Lasky was the largest producer-distributor in the USA. Adolph Zukor owned the majority of the stock and he vertically integrated film production, distribution and exhibition in one company. Famous Players-Lasky introduced the star system and brought world fame to Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. It was later renamed Paramount Pictures.

PATENT-FREE MOVIES IN THE USA

Thomas Edison tried to dominate filmmaking in the USA with his legal suits against other users of his patents. This strategy failed. For example, the Biograph Company, based in New York City, was able to make a go of it because it had established an ongoing relationship with the Keith's vaudeville chain. While Edison impeded filmmaking in the USA, some rivals stood up to the "genius of Menlo park" as Edison was known in the press of the USA. Edison constantly threatened lawsuits, but he could not prevent others from making and selling movies to exhibitors. So to earn money with the movies, Edison looked for a new business strategy.



1.19 Members of the Motion Picture Patents Company, including Thomas Alva Edison (second left, front row).

Economies of scale means that the average costs of a product decrease as more of the same products are made and sold. Thus larger corporations have lower average costs than smaller ones. This generates more profit for a business.

By 1908, Edison saw serious rivals: Biograph, Vitagraph, Essanay, Kleine, Lubin, Selig, Kalem, and American Star. So Edison proposed they all join together with the biggest supplier of raw film stock, Eastman Kodak, to create the Motion Picture Patents Company. They could share the costs of defending all the patents they claimed. Starting in 1909, the Motion Picture Patents Company ended the domination of foreign films on screens in the USA (save those from Pathé France) by suing exhibitors who dared to offer non-Motion Picture Patents Company movies to their audiences. The members of the Motion Picture Patents Company took advantage of **economies of scale** and distributed Patents Company films nationally. Edison seemed finally to gain what he always wanted – monopoly control.

The Motion Picture Patents Company eliminated the outright sale of films to independent distributors and exhibitors, replacing prices charged with rental fees, and then established a uniform rental rate for all licensed films. The Motion Picture Patents Company also established a monopoly on all aspects of filmmaking. Eastman Kodak, which owned the patent on raw film stock, was a member and thus agreed to only sell stock to “Patents Trust” members. Likewise, the Motion Picture Patents Company’s control of patents on motion picture cameras ensured that only Patents Company studios were able to film, and the projector patents allowed the Patents Company to make licensing agreements with distributors and theaters – and thus determine who screened their films and where.

The Motion Picture Patents Company tried to strictly regulate the production content of their films, primarily as a means of cost control. Films were limited to one reel in length (approximately ten minutes). Also, casts were kept uncredited on screen; studios – Edison in particular – were concerned that creating individual stars would drive up the players’ salary demands as crowds began to select their favorites. Instead, the Patents Company studios relied on an in-house stock acting company, and marketed the product based on their own brand. For example, when Biograph Studios’ leading actress (Florence Lawrence) proved popular with audiences, the studio began advertising pictures as featuring “The Biograph Girl.”

Many independent filmmakers, who still controlled from one-quarter to one-third of the domestic exhibition marketplace, responded to the creation of the Motion Picture Patents Company by moving their operations away from New York City, and eventually Hollywood would become their center for production. These independents retained offices in New York City to distribute their motion pictures.

But the Motion Picture Patents Company did not last long. In 1911, member Eastman Kodak modified its exclusive contract with the Patents Company members and started selling to unlicensed independents. The

number of theaters exhibiting independent films grew by a third within one year. Also the members of the Patents Company soon learned that independents had begun to import non-Pathé films from Europe. The slow process of using detectives to investigate patent infringements, and of obtaining injunctions against the infringers, was outpaced by the dynamic rise of new companies – the independents.

Despite the rise in popularity of the feature-length (more than six reels) films in 1912–1913 from independent producers and foreign imports, the Motion Picture Patents Company executives were making vast profits by creating and distributing single reel movies. The members of the Patents Trust proved reluctant to distribute longer feature length films. The independents had no such reluctance.

Finally patent royalties expired in September 1913. Thus, the Patents Company lost its legal ability to control the American film industry through patent licensing, and had to rely instead on its subsidiary, the General Film Company, formed in 1910, which monopolized film distribution in the USA. But independents copied national distribution – first with the Paramount company. As the Patents Company had no control over international distribution, in 1915 Paramount took advantage of the start of the First World War and exported its features to Europe.

In Europe before the First World War started there existed no patents monopoly or Edison patent suits. So, in Great Britain, for example, the production of films boomed as well, with London becoming the center of film production. Most of these companies were small with one man in charge who often handled everything from filming to directing and producing. A lot of these film production companies went bankrupt after a very short period of time and were sold to another entrepreneur who wanted to try his luck.

Great Britain's Cecil Hepworth was able to build up a relatively solid production company. Hepworth had started off as a magic lantern performer and changed to film. As early as 1898 he had already published a book on cinematography. Hepworth was technically skilled and meticulous about the way he wanted his pictures to look. In 1905 he produced a very remarkable short narrative film called *Rescued by Rover*. It tells the story of a baby being stolen by a gypsy and found again through the help of the clever dog Rover, who alerted the father of the child and showed him where the baby was hidden. This seven-minute story – with a happy ending – is told without any inter-titles because it was so perfectly edited. But Hepworth was not able to transfer his skills to longer films.

Hepworth tried to improve what was commonplace – one reel films – rather than venture into multiple reel feature filmmaking. His key innovation came with the art of publicity. From 1911 onwards, actors who had been working for him for several years were now ordered to gain as much coverage in newspapers as possible. Hepworth thus created the star system, but full exploitation of stars took place in the USA.

But the British film industry began to deteriorate as war came in 1914. While Great Britain used natural resources to wage war, US production companies started to build their own studios in England. As British movie production fell, the newly empowered independents in the USA exported more and more films to Great Britain.



1.20 *Rescued by Rover* (Cecil Hepworth, 1905). Hepworth Manufacturing Company.

AROUND THE WORLD

Starting in the late nineteenth century, from Europe and the USA, the Lumière brothers traveled around the world to show their new marvel. In China and Hong Kong, for example, the first movie shows were held in 1897. This was the case in most of the Western world.

The titles of the first movies refer very clearly to the ones of the Lumière brothers. Amongst them: *The Arrival in Shanghai of the First Train from Woosung* (1897); *The Meet of the Shanghai Bicyclist Association* (1897); *Workmen Leaving the Shanghai Engine Works* (1897).



1.21 Arrival of a train at Ciotat station or *Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat* (Lumière, 1895)

The first Chinese-owned film production company was Ren Fentai's photography business in Beijing which started recording theater plays in 1905. But until 1910 only five production companies produced movies, and most films shown came from Europe. That stopped in 1914 with the beginning of World War I. So Far Eastern nations began to import films from the USA.

The Lumière brothers also traveled to India and projected their films starting in July 1896 in the Bombay Watson hotel, in the west of India. One year later the people of Madras in the south were introduced to the moving pictures. By 1913 Madras had a permanent cinema, the Electric Theater, seating 1,000 people.



1.22 *Raja Harishchandra* (Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, 1913).

Even more important though were traveling cinema shows, as most of the Indian people lived in small rural villages and did not have access to cinemas in the large cities. Based in Bombay (Mumbai after 1995), traveling film entrepreneur Abdulally Esoofally owned a thousand-seat tent and employed 25 workers.

Early film production in India was small. During the silent period only 1,300 Indian films were produced. The three most important genres were based on theater plays, historical and mythological dramas, and films filled with elaborate stunts. Already in 1899 India's first filmmaker Harishchandra S. Bhatvadekar shot his first actuality. In the same year, Hiralal Sen started shooting theater plays in Calcutta. Filmed theater plays were very popular and the filmed short excerpts were shown on the same program as the live versions. The first attempt to produce an Indian narrative film was also connected to the Indian theater. *Pundalik* (1912) was based on a play by Ramrao Kirtikar about a great Hindu saint. But the film is lost and we only know of its popularity from press accounts.

The mythological drama *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) was made by the Indian filmmaker Dhundiraj Govind Phalke. He claimed to be inspired by a movie on the life of Christ he saw in 1910. While watching, he wondered why not make such films on Indian gods. Phalke started to teach himself how to make movies and tried to interest investors with his first experiment: an educational film *The Birth of a Pea Plant* (1912). He simply took shots of the growing plant every day for over a month. Phalke managed to gather the money to produce *Raja Harishchandra*; the film is about King Harishchandra for whom truth is the highest virtue. He is even prepared to sacrifice his family and kingdom and ultimately to kill his own wife. Happily this is prevented by Shiva, the God of Destruction, and the king is rewarded for his commitment and sincerity.

Like Méliès, who made trick films in France, Phalke was very interested in special effects. Phalke, however, used them not to entertain solely but to tell a magical story about Indian's mythological past. Indian audiences now could see the miracles happen. Mythological films became a very popular genre in Indian film. Phalke himself came from a very religious Hindu family and his mythological films tied directly into Indian religious traditions. He used the new medium of film to tell ancient stories and so film was accepted right away.

Despite the fact that all circumstances seemed to facilitate a Western dominance – India was a colony of Great Britain until 1947 – filmmakers in India took a different direction and developed a film style and film industry of their own. From the beginning, Indian films had lots of song and dance which had been a part of Indian theater for a long time. They alternated with long dialogues and spiced up the story. One recognizes the influence of the theater further in the frontal style, the direct address to the audience, the acting style and the setting. Song and dance are still the most well-known features of Indian film today. In Chapter 13 we will analyze contemporary Indian cinema.

FILM DISTRIBUTION MODEL

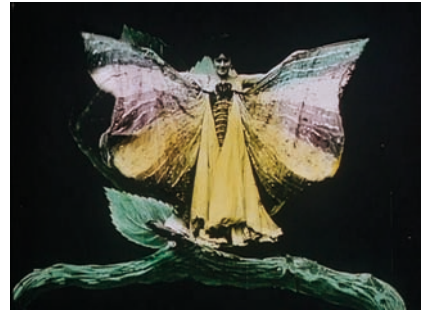
In general, before 1914, films were traded in an open marketplace. Numerous brokers sold the early films not as single units touted for their great stars or stories, but by the foot or meter. It was not until 1904 that formal wholesalers, known as film exchanges, appeared. Early major companies provided vaudeville theaters with a full-service attraction: the film, projectors, and even projectionists. Thus there was no need for a separate distribution mechanism between producer and theater owner. The rise of national distribution all through the USA came as an innovation of the General Film Company – organized by the “Patents Trust.”

European film companies – led by Pathé – provided models for world distribution. For example, Pathé began sending representatives to sell equipment and films where none existed. By encouraging local

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entrepreneurs to open theaters, Pathé created demand for its films. Pathé would then open up an exchange and saturate the area. Pathé was everywhere in the world by 1914.

By 1910 it looked like France – led by Pathé – would become the leader in the world cinema market. But this began to change with the coming of World War I as Charles Pathé decided to withdraw from exporting. During the chaos of World War I, European producers created fewer films, and were not able to keep up with the USA and the independent movie companies – led by Adolph Zukor's Paramount distribution company. In addition, Zukor began to produce feature films – and publicize his stars. So by November 1918, Zukor and other US companies – all who had fought the dictates of the Motion Picture Patents Company – dominated the world market for booking films. And Zukor moved his movie-making operations to Southern California – to a suburb of Los Angeles called Hollywood.



1.23 *Metamorphosis of the Butterfly* (Gaston Velle, 1904), Pathé. Stencil-colored.

CASE STUDY 1

WHO WENT TO SEE EARLY MOVIES IN THE USA?

Late in 1905, in New York City and large cities, immigrant operators set up nickelodeons in store-front small spaces. They did this in thousands of spaces in hundreds of communities, and jumpstarted the movie business. From then on many reports were written on the dangers of film and film historians gratefully study these to find out who were the first movie audiences.

Progressives, who loathed the new movies, reported with angst this spread of movie theater openings. Economic elites who wished to help the poor identified working-class groups as the key audience for nickelodeons. For example, it was reported that by 1910 in New York City nickelodeons serviced audiences primarily of the working class – not the middle class.



1.24 Nickelodeon, c. 1907.

Surveys found that children attended in record numbers. Well-meaning Progressives sought to protect children from the evils of the new photoplays. Another research study argued that children and young adults – ranging in age from 15 to 25 – constituted the bulk of the movie audience.

Historians of the movies took these early surveys and warnings as a way to link early cinema inextricably with working-class culture – at least until 1910 when “suddenly” narrative films began to fill even larger movie theaters with bourgeois middle-class audiences.

New movie theater owners had sought out and found a stable middle-class audience – who had the leisure time and money to pay more than five cents for going out to see a show two or three times a week. For example, as early as 1909 in industrial Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Saxe brothers opened The Princess – with 900 seats, architectural opulence, and designed as a movie auditorium, not just a converted store front.

Yet new original historical research indicates that even nickelodeons were located in busy commercial middle-class neighborhoods. The Progressives’ research found simply what they wanted to find – movies as exploiters of the working class. New historians punctured the importance of the short-lived nickelodeon era. Movie theater owners always wanted a middle-class audience as they could attend regularly and this meant more profits.

But this new conclusion still leaves many unanswered questions. How regular were such shows, and did the sudden boom in movie attendance occur in all parts of the USA at the same time? When, where, and how did non-urban audiences have access to the movies? Were the movies shown the same in different exhibition sites? In short, were there regional and/or national differences in movie-going? So far the answer seems to be that movie-going in rural areas and smaller towns took place at a different pace than in big cities like New York.

Moreover, new research indicates that before 1905 audiences saw movies at vaudeville (variety) theaters as part of a mixed show along with live acts. All towns had a local public space used for plays, musicals and variety entertainment and before 1905 movies – as part of these mixed shows – were attractive to middle-class audiences all across the USA. Much of this new research was completed by students who simply focused on a single community. All together these case studies sharpened our insights into how early movie audiences were made up.

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CHAPTER 2

THE TRIUMPH OF HOLLYWOOD

Introduction

Hollywood as a center of production, distribution, and exhibition

Market control by the independents

Differentiating the product: The feature film

Attracting the audiences through movie stars

The perfect production system: The studios

Taking control of the screens: The Paramount chain

World distribution

Towards the perfect theater: Movie palace exhibition

Opposition to the movies: The Progressives declare war

The coming of some censorship

Hollywood taking its place in society

*Case study 2: Government control of what audiences saw –
The battle of film censorship in Germany and the USA*

INTRODUCTION

Hollywood films have not always been shown around the world. It took economic innovations by the owners of the studios in the USA to create an industrial system to dominate not only screenings in the USA, but also the rest of the world.

There were two important factors that explained the Hollywood success. First was the development of the star system as fans lined up to see the latest film by Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford. Second, Hollywood producers and directors fashioned techniques of telling stories that would be attractive to audiences everywhere.

Around 1917, exhibition changed, again pioneered in the USA with the picture palace. These cathedrals of movie pleasure were huge (sometimes 5,000 seats), ornate, easy to get to even in large cities, offered live shows along with their Hollywood movies and were even air conditioned.



2.1 Bunny Theater, New York.

The popularity of movies scared educated adults who thought that motion pictures caused their children to be under-educated and to copy the behaviors they saw on the screen. Many groups called for government censorship.

By 1922 the movie industry in the USA was growing rapidly and contracting into a small number of major studios. These studios banded together as the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, to help the major companies cope with censorship and to improve the image of the movies to the general public and anti-movie groups.

HOLLYWOOD AS A CENTER OF PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND EXHIBITION

Since 1919, Hollywood has been much more than a set of movie-making companies all located together in Southern California. Hollywood included production, distribution and exhibition of films.

- (1) Production: first films must be created. By 1919, movie making was taking place in studios and on locations in and around Los Angeles – generically known as Hollywood.
- (2) Distribution: these Hollywood companies then peddled their productions throughout the world. Indeed world-wide distribution has long marked the basis of Hollywood's true – but nearly invisible – source of power. No other film industry has been so far reaching – both as an economic and a social force.
- (3) Exhibition: finally in 1919 Hollywood began to purchase theaters which booked its films, in the USA initially. Prior to the coming of television, movies were shown principally in theaters. Developed nations followed the theatrical model found in the USA, while poorer nations used more informal settings.

The movie historian must ask how Hollywood came to dominate production, distribution, and exhibition. To analyze the film industry we will consider two steps. First, we shall establish who owned the principal

companies which controlled production, distribution, and exhibition. Hollywood, from 1920 to 1950, was defined by a small set of companies that dominated all three aspects (“the studios”).

Once we understand ownership and control, we seek to learn how these companies operated in this historical context. In the USA, Hollywood ruled with an iron fist. Abroad, native industries had to react to Hollywood’s invasion and then constant presence. Sometimes they cooperated; sometimes they tried to devise new and alternative strategies to challenge Hollywood, and recapture their own nation’s film business. Because of abusive corporate practices, small companies would seek government help. For example, they pressed for laws to limit power through special taxes, antitrust decrees, quotas on what could be shown, and/or subsidies to certain types of filmmakers. We can see why the British reacted in this typical way as Hollywood captured 90 percent of the UK market. The US federal government established an office to assist exporting Hollywood films, and the industry established a trade association to work with the federal agency. European nations established government actions of their own – from quotas on how many Hollywood movies could be shown on screens in their countries, to taxes on admissions to theaters that showed Hollywood films.

MARKET CONTROL BY THE INDEPENDENTS

Hollywood commenced with the failure of the Motion Picture Patents Company as analyzed in Chapter 1. From the start, violations by independents like Zukor were frequent. Theater owners wanted to book films and not pay the royalties to the Motion Picture Patents Company. Independent producers like Zukor set up shop to supply these needs, as the Motion Picture Patents Company ended in 1914. By 1919 Hollywood was dominated by Adolph Zukor’s Paramount Pictures.

The expectations of enormous riches gave these and other self-reliant entrepreneurs an incentive to break with the Patents Trust and create Hollywood.



2.2 The Warner Brothers.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

As the First World War was ending these new Hollywood companies began to differentiate their products. Gone were the days when film was sold by the foot. Each movie became a unique product so that it could be heavily advertised. Differentiation was accomplished by emphasizing popular stories, and then developing movie stars to act in them. Second, the feature-length movies were marketed broadly. Remember this was the era of the silent cinema when it was easy to translate **inter-titles** and produce versions in French, Spanish, German, and other widely spoken languages. Third, Hollywood learned to take control of exhibition in the USA without having to buy all the theaters (more than 20,000). Instead, they developed chains of movie palaces which dominated the theater business in the major urban areas of the USA. Movie-goers, concentrated in cities, went to first or second run screenings and guaranteed the bulk of the revenues which would accrue to Hollywood films.

Inter-titles are short texts edited between scenes in silent films to fashion speech, explain action, and explain important story information to the viewer. They were used to establish time and place of the action, to introduce the characters and their relations, and to replace dialogue (as there was no sound). Inter-titles could easily be changed by cutting them out and replacing them in another language. In that way a film could be adapted to local preferences and/or different languages.

In short the most successful independents succeeded at what the Motion Picture Patents Company failed to accomplish – control of production, distribution, and exhibition. In the process they took over the world of cinema and created the powerful empire that would be known as Hollywood.

National demand required year-round production. To meet production requirements, year-round sunshine could be found in Southern California. The nearby mountains and flatlands provided locations of a varied sort for all types of movies. By 1920, Hollywood Boulevard had become the hottest of the hot spots, a symbol the world over. By 1925, Hollywood had more press representatives than in any place in the USA other than New York City, even exceeding Washington, DC.

Independents congregating in Hollywood sought ways in which to stabilize, control and dominate the business of making and showing movies. During the 1910s the successful companies, led by Adolph Zukor, developed specific ways to manufacture and rent popular, feature-length films. This would be known as the Hollywood system of production. Through the principles of the feature film, the star system, and the studio method of filmmaking, Hollywood companies taught the world how to “properly” make profitable movies. Many contributed to the development of the Hollywood system of production; only Adolph Zukor fully exploited it.

DIFFERENTIATING THE PRODUCT: THE FEATURE FILM

Independents sought to offer their audiences something different – longer films. Vaudeville (variety) theaters and nickelodeons presented numerous ten-minute long short subjects. The legitimate theater, in turn, had always presented one play, for a two-hour (or longer) show. The feature film would follow this latter model and focus on one film. Short newsreels or animated subjects might provide a complement, but it would be the two-hour movie which would sell the show.

What this meant was that the feature film had to be a story of unusual interest, and produced at a cost far in excess of what had been available in the past. Inspiration came from the serial. Indeed a Motion Picture Patents Company member, Vitagraph, had released a four-part version of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* over

a span of three months in 1909. Serials provided important ways to test new audiences for longer forms. So did foreign features. The influx of foreign features began in 1911 as independents imported epics from European filmmakers who did not care about the Patents Trust and were happy to have the extra business. Classic tales from Italy such as *The Fall of Troy* (*La caduta di Troia*, 1911); *Dante's Inferno* (*Inferno*, 1911) and *Jerusalem Delivered* (*La Gerusalemme liberata*, 1911) proved there was a market for longer fare, and even met with the approval of doubting reformers and educators.

ATTRACTING THE AUDIENCES THROUGH MOVIE STARS

But what was the best way to construct and sell these elaborate, expensive feature films? What was needed was a way to make each new film special, a product which would sell itself. To effect such a strategy Hollywood simply aped the vaudeville industry and initiated the star system. Everyone recognized that vaudeville had long used headliners to sell the show. As early as 1909, the Edison Company publicized its acquisition of important theatrical talent from Broadway impresarios David Belasco, Charles Frohman, and Otis Skinner. In 1910, Kalem and Vitagraph introduced lobby displays featuring the headline players. Thus, the star system began somewhat reluctantly with the Motion Picture Patents Company, but was fully exploited and developed by independents.

Independents were more aggressive in promoting possible stars. For example, Carl Laemmle hired away Florence Lawrence, and renamed the former "Biograph Girl" the "IMP Girl" after his Independent Motion Picture company. He then sent his "new" star on tour, and planted story after story in the newspapers, often blaming the Motion Picture Patents Company for spreading false information about Lawrence. Laemmle announced in every town that would have him and his press agents that "Florence Lawrence was indeed alive and could be seen in the new IMP production of..." Stars provided a means of differentiating films and boosting sales.

Movie makers turned to the legitimate theater for the first famous players. By 1913, a number of companies specialized in filming popular Broadway plays. Adolph Zukor's "Famous Players in Famous Plays" would be the most noted of these because it alone would survive into the studio era of the 1930s. Zukor and his partners' early successes included *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1913) starring James O'Neill, *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1913) starring James Hackett, *Queen Elizabeth* (1912) starring Sarah Bernhardt, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1913) starring Minnie Maddern Fiske. But the new, independent movie producers realized they would eventually have to begin to develop their own movie stars, not simply hire stage stars. Consider the career of Mary Pickford. This Canadian-born vaudeville performer saw her salary increase accordingly:

- 1909 – \$100 per week
- 1910 – \$175 per week
- 1914 – \$1,000 per week



2.3 Mary Pickford.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

1915 – \$2,000 per week

1916 – \$10,000 per week

1917 – \$15,000 per week

Famous Players was willing to pay Mary more than a million dollars per year in 1917 because her films drew so many to the box-office. Fans went to her films religiously, lining up as soon as the box-office opened.

Mary's experience pushed Hollywood companies to develop their own "Little Mary," and then sign them to exclusive, long-run contracts so that the player could not seek a higher salary elsewhere. The Hollywood company would advertise the star and milk the profits from the films. Studios regularly issued feature-length attractions with elaborately prepared scenarios, widely advertising these releases. Soon the narratives, *mise-en-scène*, camerawork and editing were all centered around the star.

Many of these names are still known. Everyone has seen or heard of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton – comic giants. Rudolph Valentino as "the Sheik" is still often parodied.

The star system hit a peak on 15 January 1919 when four of the biggest stars in the business – Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and William S. Hart – joined with director D. W. Griffith to create United Artists. This company of stars issued a declaration of independence from their former employers, announcing the formation of their own distribution company so they could fully extract the riches of their fame, and pulling power at the box-office. For the first time ever, motion picture performers acquired complete autonomy over their work, controlling a corporate apparatus which set in motion approved promotion, advertising, and publicity.

The new United Artists did not lack for popular films: *The Mask of Zorro* (1920 – starring Douglas Fairbanks), *Robin Hood* (1923 – starring Fairbanks), *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1921 – starring Pickford), and *The Gold Rush* (1925 – starring Charlie Chaplin). The problem was they could not offer enough regularly released films to fill any theater for a year. Even though theater owners wanted Chaplin, Fairbanks, and Pickford films, they could not afford to show nothing else while waiting for them. Thus in the long run United Artists was never able to fully exploit its stars or develop new ones. It survived because the original owners hired Joseph Schenck as President to run the company, attract other producers, and increase UA's output. As the marquee value of Pickford, Fairbanks, and Griffith began to fade, United Artists became a haven for independent producers (some good, some bad) fleeing from the strict confines of MGM, Paramount, Fox, and Warner Bros.



2.4 Charlie Chaplin as businessman.

THE PERFECT PRODUCTION SYSTEM: THE STUDIOS

As the Hollywood system of feature films with major stars was developed, it necessitated a way of guaranteeing the shipment of such films to theaters on a weekly basis. Hollywood studios needed to develop efficient and cost-effective production methods. At the same time, to attract customers, the feature film

Mise-en-scène
is a French
expression
literally meaning
"what is placed
on the stage."
In cinema it
encompasses
what is placed
in front of
the cameras
– actors and
their behavior,
props, make-up,
settings, lighting,
and costumes.

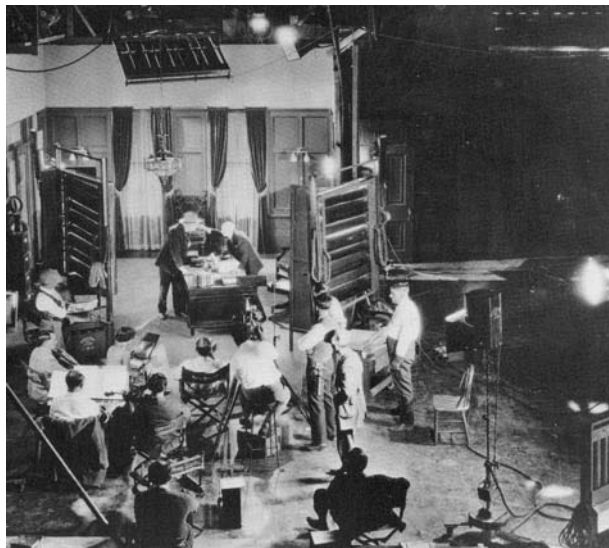
needed to meet a certain standard of quality. To do this initially had been easy with one-reel films. Once the switch was made to feature-length films, a new organization for production was needed. This became known as the studio system.

As more and more theaters opened and more films were needed, the disadvantages of modeling themselves on the legitimate theater became evident. Filmmakers realized that if they shot all scenes of one locale at one time, money would be saved. That is, it was less expensive to shoot the story “out of order” to save money rather than recording the scenes as they might be staged in a theater. Once all planned scenes were filmed, in whatever order, an editor could re-assemble them, following the dictates of the script. All this required a carefully thought-out, pre-arranged plan to calculate the minimum cost in advance. Such a plan became known as the shooting script.

The shooting script was based on a story which would please the audience. The filmmaker thus had to fashion shooting scripts which would turn out to be popular films. Interesting stories fashioned with appropriate degrees of reality and clarity became the standard for the well-made movie. Gradually, as features became longer, stories became more complicated and appealing, requiring ever more complex shooting scripts. It was impossible to “fit” everything into a short subject; a feature needed more and more time to tender a complete story.

The solution to faster feature filmmaking was to pay careful attention to shooting script preparation. Through careful planning the director could make a careful estimate of the necessary footage for each required scene, and then piece them together so they fit in the end. Gradually filmmakers developed tricks so that few shots ever had to be re-done. Inter-titles were often added to eliminate a scene while making the story as tight and taut as possible. (And could be easily translated, facilitating world distribution.)

Thus, both efficient filmmaking (always now “out of order”) and a standard of clearly annunciated exciting, continuously appealing stories with fascinating characters became the norm filmmakers sought. The typical script noted its genre (comedy or drama, for example), cast of characters, and a synopsis of the story, and only then went onto a scene-by-scene scenario including inter-titles. The director could estimate how long shooting would take to film, and what resources would be required. From this proposed plan, the head of the film company could decide if he wanted to make this movie. By 1920 Hollywood had developed this studio method of making movies. The Hollywood method proved to be the best way to maximize profits.



2.5 Director Harry Beaumont in the old Warner Bros. Pictures studio on Sunset, Hollywood, c.1923.

The writing departments of the Hollywood companies prepared the scripts. By 1911 such units were established to adapt material, and ever more frequently to create original screenplays. Most work was done in house to regularize the production of scripts and avoid copyright hassles. By 1913 writing departments

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

even had sub-unit experts in adapting the classics, or providing original material. Additional experts then took the screenplays and estimated costs of production and sets, and allocated the time of stars, supporting players, and men and women behind the camera, all of whom were under contract. Once the process was complete, a detailed plan existed that was familiar to everyone and best utilized the resources at hand. Within this system the director lost much of the power he or she had a decade earlier. The director was required to simply make the movie as planned by others.

Thomas Ince – a producer and director – set in motion a standard working procedure involving the producer who worked from the continuity script. Script approval set projects in motion utilizing available buildings in the studio, and scores of technical workers and specialists organized by department. The studio factory contained buildings which housed sets, wardrobes, directors, screenwriters and management plus stages and a back lot with standing sets and even a water tank – a veritable city within a city.

A program of films was planned a year in advance by the studio boss and their assistants. Experts planned the films, supervised creation of the scripts, and worked on the coordination of the myriad of details to make the films. Sets would be used over and over again, adapted for different stories. Art directors handled the building of the sets; costumers planned what stars and extras would wear; casting directors found the talent; make-up artists perfected the best dyes and bases for the proper movie look, and cinematographers were picked on the basis of who could work fast and efficiently.

The actual shooting was always done “out of order.” Actors were shuttled from film to film to make the best use of their time under contract. Often multiple cameras were used for complicated shots so they did not have to be staged twice. This was nearly always the case for battlefield sequences. And always present was the continuity clerk who checked that filming could be later assembled to flow and the story would make sense. The final print of the film was assembled by a team of editors following guidelines set by the producer.

TAKING CONTROL OF THE SCREENS: THE PARAMOUNT CHAIN

Adolph Zukor and his Paramount distribution unit taught the world how to fully exploit feature films. By 1921 Zukor had turned his company into the largest film distributor in the world. In 1916 Zukor had merged 12 smaller producers and the distributor Paramount to form Famous Players–Lasky Corporation. As the feature-length film with a number of headlining stars became the dominant attraction and motivation for the profits, Famous Players became the dominant force in the industry. Zukor started out as an exhibitor in New York City and then turned to production by creating a new company called “Famous Players in Famous Plays” to create feature films. Zukor looked to create stars for Famous Players’ productions, and by 1917 Mary Pickford had become one of the most notable figures of her time.



2.6 Adolph Zukor.

Zukor, recognizing that not all theaters were equal, then began to charge more for screenings at new, larger, movie palaces located in big cities and less for rental to small town movie houses. Large theaters paid \$500–\$700 a week for a five-reel feature while small houses might pay less than \$50. Still theaters booked what made money and so of the estimated 20,000 theaters in the United States in 1919, a quarter were regularly presenting Famous Players films. Next, Zukor forced theaters to book a whole year's worth of Famous Players features even before they were made – known in the trade as block booking and blind buying. That is, if a theater wanted to show the films of Mary Pickford, it had to take pictures with less well-known stars.

Soon Zukor began to acquire his own theaters. Such a large venture could not, however, be financed with the cash on hand, however well the company was doing. This was a real estate venture of the largest magnitude. Thus, Famous Players borrowed \$10 million with the help of the Wall Street banking house of Kuhn, Loeb, and became the first Hollywood studio to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Zukor had hit the big time.



2.7 Paramount Theater, 1927.



2.8 MGM lot, 1924.

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Zukor moved quickly, and by 1922 he owned 300 theaters. Four years later he merged his Paramount theater chain with Balaban & Katz, the most important and innovative theater chain in the USA. In the space of six years Paramount had moved from a non-player in the world of theaters to the dominant player. And, by purchasing so many circuits, it doomed its major competitors. By 1931 Paramount's newly named Publix theater circuit would be the largest in the world, double the size of its nearest competitor – which was Loew's, Inc, which in 1924 started its own production company, MGM.

WORLD DISTRIBUTION

It was not enough for the Hollywood companies to simply control all the movie stars, studios, and biggest theater chains. Their long-run economic security depended on the construction and maintenance of networks for national and international distribution. Once a feature film was made, the majority of its cost had been accumulated, and the cost to market them around the world was small compared to the investment in production. The more theaters Zukor could book a Famous Players film, the more revenue it could make and then, with the cost of production already paid, the more profit it could make. This is a simple application of economies of scale.

The rise of Hollywood thus required the exporting of Hollywood movies to all parts of the globe. While other national cinemas usually played only in the country of production, Zukor saw the world as his proper marketplace. Quickly other international distributors were formed: The William Fox Film Company, Carl Leammle's Universal Pictures and then later United Artists, Columbia Pictures, and the Warner Bros. studio. By 1920 these Hollywood companies had firmly established their distribution offices throughout North and South America, and, with the European First World War, into all other nations of the world. The First World War significantly curtailed the production and distribution power of European movie makers and into that gap stepped Hollywood to replace French and Italian producer-distributors. As the First World War ended on 11 November 1918, Hollywood was capturing a greater and greater share of film screen time in Latin America, Asia, and Africa as well.

Zukor did not care where he did business, as all he had to do was hire inter-title writers to convert the Hollywood titles in English into native languages. The key to Hollywood's success during the war was to avoid relying too much on Europe and turning to other markets. In 1913 Hollywood took nearly all its money from Europe and North America, with the bulk of the remainder coming from Australia and New Zealand. But in 1916 sizable monies were being drawn from other parts of the world. For example, South America's and Asia's purchases increased eight-fold. By the end of hostilities Hollywood settled down into a comfortable corporate empire. Exhibitors around the world seemed eager for Hollywood films, especially in countries with no native film production. During the 1920s, prior to the coming of sound, Hollywood solidified itself firmly in all parts of the world.

During the silent movie era, no film industry could challenge Hollywood. In Great Britain, Canada, and Australia (with a common language), Hollywood controlled some 85 percent of screen time; in France, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania about two-thirds. The case was the same in South America, the Caribbean and Central America. By 1922 Argentina and Brazil entered Hollywood's top five markets. The movie distribution world of the 1920s was a US market almost wherever anyone cared to travel. Adolph Zukor made the world Hollywood's marketplace.

But this was more than simple economic success for Hollywood. The international distribution of Hollywood and its unique ability to maintain popularity everywhere had a great effect on the history of world cinema.

Other countries had to struggle, not simply to please their native movie fans, but to somehow “better” Hollywood which had become the de facto world standard. Hollywood by international control defined the state of world cinema. From this economic power base Hollywood would define appropriate standards of film style, form and content. In chapter after chapter of this survey of film history we shall see the effects of the Hollywood international distribution monopoly.

For example, prior to the war, Germany had been a leader in standing against Hollywood imports. Even after losing the First World War, the German film industry held off Hollywood until 1923. That year German films held a 60 percent market share, the USA 25 percent and the rest of the world 15 percent. Then Adolph Zukor began to pressure the German government to open its market place; German exhibitors backed Zukor. In a year, the change was remarkable. German producers’ share of the market dropped to less than half the exhibition market share – all lost to Hollywood.

These shares of exhibition time were more in Hollywood’s favor in other nations of the world. In Australia, for example, with little movie industry of its own, more than 90 percent of the films imported in 1920 were from Hollywood and 10 percent from the UK. In terms of screen time – not simply the number of films – the figure was 95 percent Hollywood and 5 percent for the rest of the world.



2.9 US films flooding Europe. Cover of feature issue on America, *Internationale Filmschau*, 1 June 1921.

TOWARDS THE PERFECT THEATER: MOVIE PALACE EXHIBITION

Adolph Zukor knew the money came through the theatrical box-office, and thus sought some measure of control over that sector of the film business. If Hollywood could be found in its studios, and offices for distribution throughout the world, it could also be located in the movie palaces which were situated on main streets from New York to Los Angeles, and Chicago to Dallas.

The most successful movie palace operation in the USA started in 1917 in Chicago, then the second largest city in the USA. The Balaban brothers and neighbor Sam Katz started to systematically dominate Chicago by opening the Central Park theater, located 5 miles west of the city center of Chicago. To outdo smaller operators, they hired a 50-piece orchestra to play with the silent films using popular (and non-copyrighted) classical music.



2.10 Sam Katz, creator and operator of the greatest chain of movie palaces in motion picture history.

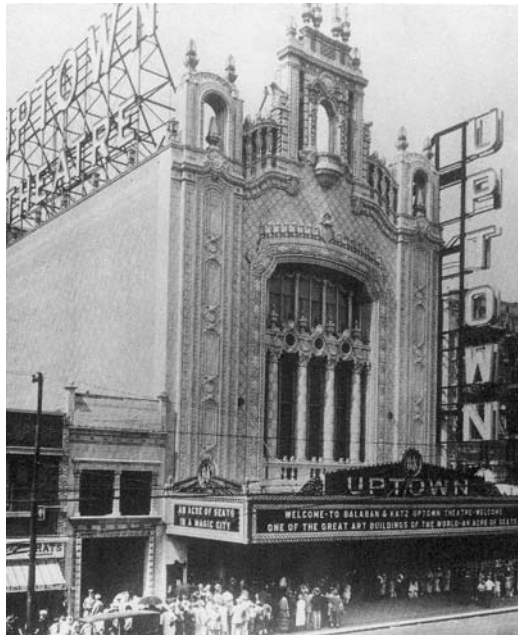
MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Then Balaban & Katz added as “extras” a newsreel, a travelogue, and a comic short. Finally B&K hired live variety talent to create stage shows. And Balaban & Katz offered all this from 9am to midnight.

With later theaters they had architects create a fantasy world inside, and light displays and signage outside – often three stories high. Balaban & Katz hired ushers to handle the crowds. These ushers – in military-looking uniforms – added a touch of class usually only found in legitimate theaters in downtown Chicago.

Balaban & Katz’s success commenced when the Central Park theater opened in October 1917. This mighty picture palace was an immediate success and Sam Katz, as corporate planner and president, opened a second picture palace in the fashionable Uptown district of Chicago’s far north side: the Riviera. At this point Katz put together a syndicate of backers who were all doing so well in their own Chicago-based businesses that they had some extra cash to invest: Julius Rosenwald, head of Sears-Roebuck, William Wrigley, Jr. of chewing gum fame, and John Hertz, Chicago’s taxi king. With their support, Balaban & Katz opened the 4,000-seat Tivoli theater in February 1921, and the equally large Chicago theater downtown in October 1921. By closely examining why Balaban & Katz was able to expand so rapidly, with so much success, we can understand why the movie exhibition business moved from a marginal leisure time industry to center stage in the business of entertainment.

Balaban & Katz discovered that the location of a movie palace was key. Before Balaban & Katz, movie theater owners selected prevailing entertainment and shopping districts for their location. But Chicagoans were moving to live near the stations for their intra-city rail systems. These elevated lines were being built in Chicago as Balaban & Katz sought locations and so B&K bought up massive lots near the newest stations. These new stations were more often than not located near the edge of the city proper and so Balaban & Katz took full advantage of this revolution in mass transit by building its first movie palaces in the heart of *outlying* business centers, not downtown. Only after this success of theaters miles from downtown Chicago did Balaban & Katz seek to construct a movie palace downtown.



2.11 Sam Katz’s 5,000-seat Uptown Theater in Chicago on opening day, 1924.

Balaban & Katz proved that the movie entertainment business was not one of simple *mass* market appeal. Middle-class folks who had recently settled on the edges of the city and commuted to work by elevated rail line went to the movies far more than has been considered. Indeed, they used the elevated rail lines to journey to a grander theater. It is crucial to recognize that during the 1920s young, upwardly mobile city dwellers proved the most frequent attendees of the movie palace shows.

But with no connections to a Hollywood company, Balaban & Katz had to showcase the movies it could book and so Balaban & Katz started their show with the *building* which housed the movies – the picture palace. The building was an attraction unto itself. With the pride associated with the opening of a world’s fair or a new skyscraper, the middle-class population of Chicago of the 1920s proclaimed and heralded their movie palaces as the finest in the

world. All Balaban & Katz theaters spelled opulence to the average Chicago movie-goer, symbolizing a special treat, more than simply “going-out-to-the-movies.”

The Chicago architectural firm headed by the brothers George and C. W. Rapp designed the Central Park theater, and from that day forward for nearly two decades their drawing boards were not without at least one major movie palace project for Balaban & Katz. Rapp & Rapp signified opulence, by mixing design elements from many eras, including French, Spanish, Italian, Moorish and later Art Deco renderings. Among their trademarks were the main façade's triumphal arch (inspired by the Arc de Triomphe in Paris), the monumental staircase (inspired by the Paris Opera House), and the grand, column-lined lobby (inspired by the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles).

The architecture of the movie palace was designed to insulate the public from the outside world, and provide a stage for the entertainment. The theatrical aspect of the movie palace entertainment commenced long before one went inside. Indeed it began on the street as one first gazed upon strong vertical lines accentuated by ascending pilasters, windows and towers, lifting high above the shop fronts. The building was a rigid, steel shell, with an inner core in which the plaster decoration was hung. Prior theaters needed columns to hold all the weight but Balaban & Katz hired The United States Steel Company of nearby Gary, Indiana, to fashion massive steel beams to support balconies and not require columns that would obstruct anyone's view. Then Rapp & Rapp added painted plaster in brilliant purples, golds, azures, and crimsons to surround the fans with a visual show worthy of the Chicago Institute of Art.

Outside, massive electric signs established “bright light” centers, seen for miles by those on intra-city elevated rail lines. The upright signs towered 100 feet in height and flashed their messages in several colors. Behind the upright sign were stained glass windows which reflected the lights into the lobby. These exterior lights reminded many of the glories of the **World's Fair** of 1892 that had been held in Chicago when serious electrical light displays were first introduced into the city. The stained glass windows evoked an era of church architecture. The messages may have been mixed but the display was dazzling.

Once inside, the patrons weaved through a series of vestibules, foyers, lounges, promenades and waiting rooms designed to impress, even excite. The lobbies and foyers were, if anything, more spectacular than the architectural fantasy outside. Decorations included opulent chandeliers lighting every major room, classical drapery on walls and entrances, luxurious chairs and fountains, and grand spaces for piano and/or organ accompaniment for waiting crowds. And since there always seemed to be a line, keeping new customers happy was as important as entertaining those already in the auditorium. Inside everyone had a perfect view of the screen and careful acoustical planning assured the orchestral accompaniment to the silent films could be heard even in the furthest reaches of the top balcony. This was a dignified setting and patrons responded accordingly.



2.12 Lavish cinema interior of the Tampa Theater in Florida.

World Fairs were international expositions organized to stimulate international trade relations, and to showcase economic, social, cultural and technological progress of the participating countries. The first World Fair was held in 1851 in London. The most famous World's Fairs in the USA came in 1892 in Chicago, and in 1939 in New York.

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The publicity for these theaters emphasized “class” to the average movie-goer. One commentator compared these Balaban & Katz theaters to baronial halls or grand hotels in which one might have tea or attend a ball. They were planned to make Balaban & Katz’s upwardly mobile patrons feel like they were in palatial surroundings or in the haunts of a modern business tycoon.

Balaban & Katz had a policy of treating the movie patron as royalty. It offered *services* to customers including free child care, smoking rooms, and painting galleries in the foyers and lobbies. In the basement of each movie palace was a complete playground which included slides, sand boxes and other objects of fun one rarely saw outside a traditional playground. Children were left in the care of nurses while families were at the show upstairs. Indeed there were special afternoon tea shows for women who went shopping with small children and infants.

Ushers maintained a quiet decorum in the theater with the upper-class atmosphere. They guided patrons through the maze of halls and foyers, assisted the elderly and small children, and handled any emergencies which might arise. A picture palace had 40 ushers and doormen in attendance. Balaban & Katz recruited its staff from male college students, dressed them in red uniforms with white gloves and yellow epaulets and demanded they be obediently polite to even the rudest of patrons. All requests had to end with a “thank you;” under no circumstances were tips to be accepted. The special service was “free,” included in the price of admission.

Balaban & Katz heavily marketed its live *stage shows*. Balaban & Katz became vaudeville entrepreneurs, developing local talent into stars who could then make the circuit in their theaters in Chicago. If they could mount popular but tasteful shows, they could attract the middle-class audience who had grown up on vaudeville. The strategy worked. In time Balaban & Katz became more famous for its impressive stage attractions, orchestras, and organists than any movies it presented.

Balaban & Katz stage shows were elaborate mini-musicals with spectacular settings and intricate lighting effects. These stage shows stood as a separate package of entertainment, emphasizing themes rather than individual stars. There were shows to celebrate holidays, trends of the day, heroic adventures, indeed all the highlights of the **Roaring Twenties** from the Charleston dance craze to the celebration of the trans-Atlantic

Roaring Twenties refers to the dynamic 1920s in the USA when economic growth stimulated the production and consumption of mass-produced consumer goods like cars and radios. The 1920s also saw an unprecedented explosion of artistic expression in music, architecture, design, literature and films.



2.13 KiMo Theater in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

flight of **Charles Lindbergh**. In the movie exhibition trade this strategy was known as the “pure presentation” as opposed to a prologue which linked dramatically and thematically to the movie which followed.

For its orchestras and organists who provided music for the silent films, Balaban & Katz depended on the star system. Jesse Crawford became famous throughout Chicago during the 1920s. In 1923 Crawford’s wedding to fellow organist Helen Anderson was the talk of Chicago’s tabloids. The couple began to perform together, and by 1925 had their own radio show and recording contract. When Sam Katz took the pair to New York, the newspapers mourned the loss in the same way they would have lamented the leaving of a member of the Chicago Cubs or White Sox baseball player.

The final characteristic of the Balaban & Katz movie exhibition strategy was an important innovation of movie theater presentation. Balaban & Katz offered the only air-conditioned movie theaters in the world, providing comfort during the summer that no middle-class American could resist for long. After 1926 most important movie palaces in the USA installed air conditioning.

The Central Park Theater, opened in 1917, was the first mechanically air-cooled theater in the world. Prior to the Central Park, most movie houses in the Midwest, South and Far West simply closed during the summer or opened to small crowds. Great progress toward safe mechanical cooling was made during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Technological change centered in Chicago because firms in that city processed most of the meat in the USA and then refrigerated it until it could be sold. Engineers who specialized in refrigeration invented the first air cooling and then added dehumidification to create what we accept as air conditioning. The necessary apparatus took up a room in the basement of the movie palace with 15,000 feet of heavy duty piping, 200 40-horsepower electric motors, and two thousand-pound flywheels.

Once in place these air-cooled fantasy worlds became famous as summer time escapes from the brutal Chicago summers. Balaban & Katz’s publicity constantly reminded those in Chicago that going to the movies offered a rare treat even if the movie did not offer a gripping story. Icicles were hung from all newspaper advertisements. The Public Health Commissioner of the city of Chicago proclaimed that Balaban & Katz theaters had purer air than the tallest peaks in the Rocky Mountains, and that anyone with a lung disease ought to regularly spend time “at the movies.” The results were nothing short of phenomenal. Movie trade papers noted the consistently high grosses during the summer months and could find no better explanation than the comfort inside. Indeed the takings at the box-office in the summer regularly exceeded those during the previously peak-time winter months.

Location, architecture, service, stage shows and air conditioning made the movie palace into a US

American pilot, Charles Lindbergh (1902–1974), became world famous in 1927 when he flew solo and non-stop from New York (USA) to Paris (France) in his single-engine plane The Spirit of St. Louis in 33 hours and 30 minutes. Other pilots had made the same trip but he was the first who did it alone without a stop.



2.14 World headquarters of Paramount with Zukor’s office just below the clock.

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institution. Sometimes it seemed the movies themselves simply did not matter. With its five-part system of mass entertainment Balaban & Katz made more money than any chain of movie houses in the world. Their theaters were filled from morning to night, nearly every day of the week. Prices had soared past five and ten cents, sometimes reaching a dollar for the best seats on Saturday and Sunday nights. This was no makeshift nickelodeon, but a carefully crafted package of pleasure designed to maximize profits.

In 1925, Adolph Zukor wanted the Balaban & Katz system and so purchased the company and brought its president, Sam Katz, to run Paramount's expanded chain of theaters. By 1931 Katz had assembled the largest number of movie palaces in the world, and set standards that rest of the movie theater industry in the USA followed. Zukor and Katz created the most successful and powerful theater enterprise of its day and set the standard for Hollywood's presence by defining what was so special about movie palaces.

An estimated two million people attended a Paramount theater each day. And as the head of this operation, Sam Katz decided on everything from the patterns of the carpets to appropriate music to film booking. He ranked as the most powerful executive in the movie business, although few movie fans would ever recognize him on the street. The studio also owned several theaters in Europe and installed the "Paramount exhibition system" in Paris and thus set a new standard in major European cities. Katz branded his chain "Publix," and his slogan summed it all up: "You don't need to know what's playing at a Publix House. It's bound to be the best show in town."

OPPOSITION TO THE MOVIES: THE PROGRESSIVES DECLARE WAR

What the movies ran into in the opening of the twentieth century in the United States was the myriad of forces which historians have labeled the Progressive Era. The "Progressives" were dedicated to the idea that there was progress in this world and that all technical changes ought to be used to improve the human condition. Fundamentally, Progressivists found fault with the coming of cities and growing industries in the USA. They admired the farm economy of the past. That is, they wanted change which led to a world only available in the past. The crowding of America's cities, the development of governmental bureaucracies, and even the coming of the movies only made life more difficult for the individual seeking a correct path through life.

A new force arose to deal with these problems, a professional middle class dedicated to making the world a better place. They wanted to use scientific methods of psychology, sociology, economics, political science, and education to teach students to adapt to a fast changing world. The school became a site for social change and the educator became a social reformer. And hopefully the marvel of the movies could teach us all to better understand our world, make sense of our role in it, and rise to greater glories as a society.

Social workers, trained in the new social sciences, fanned out to "do good" in America's cities. These social workers set up operations in the various ghettos of major US cities and despaired that the new movie theater down the street was where the young people wanted to go, not to after-school classes. They could positively affect schools and even religious institutions to some degree, but this new force of the motion pictures was in private hands and its poorly educated owners did not care to make the movies a force for good. The struggles between the Progressives and the leaders of the movie industry brought this debate out in the open. Could the movies be controlled? Or would the movies simply stagnate as another social evil?

Once the picture palaces arose, the motion picture industry found itself under close scrutiny. This was no organized mass movement, but a response from interested sectors of society to what they saw as a mass temptation of young people to the "evil" movies. Their criticisms and reactions seemed to center on four issues: (1) supposed negative effects on children from the lack of educational purpose; (2) the potential



2.15 Ringling Theater, Baraboo, Wisconsin. Opened in 1915 as pioneering picture palace in the USA.

health problems of so many young people crowded into one space; (3) the negative stories portrayed by movies as negative influences on proper morals and manners; and (4) the ill effect of the movies on attendance at Christian churches.

If Progressivism had a central theme, it was to seek better health, education, and urban conditions for children. The child symbolized all that the Progressives held dear. Only through youngsters, with their innocence and freedom, could scientific, rational concepts mold a better society. Within this context the movies provided their lure for the young. Once these four negative effects were determined by scientific surveys, social workers, public school educators, and Christian clergymen kept an eye on the conditions of the theaters, and the growing time spent at the movies and the decreasing lack of interest in attendance at school and church. Yet all scientific surveys ever proved was that the movies were more fun than traditional school, and never proved the negative effects that were simply asserted.

Consider the experience of probably the most famous Progressive: **Jane Addams** of Chicago. In her book *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets* (1909), Addams devoted a chapter to the new “House of Dreams.” Although she praised the opportunity for another recreational outlet in crowded Chicago, she voiced considerable skepticism because of possible harmful effects. The movies, she argued, taking a tack repeated by countless others, provided a fantasy world, impossible for most children to ever aspire to. The world of the movies offered simply a cruel illusion. As Balaban & Katz drew thousands of young fans, there seemed to be a tinge of jealousy because the movie palace was luring young people away from the Progressive activities of Jane Addams – drawing children to a center for fun and learning – which could never match what Balaban & Katz could offer.

Jane Addams (1860–1935) was a Progressive social activist who saw the early movies as harmful to children and supported censorship in Chicago. In 1895 she co-founded the first settlement house in Chicago (a place where poor children could learn and be fed). In 1931 she received the Nobel Prize for Peace.

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Many echoed Addams' fears and sentiments. The movies were compared to a disease which would sap the strength and moral energy of a generation. Others found it to be the new century's most disturbing social problem. Still others argued the movies encouraged criminal behavior, and unwanted sexual activity. They drew a portrait of a darkened room filled with children of mixed ages, religions, genders and even at times races. Such an image sent fear into the hearts of Progressives who wanted to remold the world with Victorian and Christian standards of decorum and courtship, done at a proper time in the child's development and certainly segregated by race.

The impact of the movies, Progressives argued, threaded its way through all areas of life, from the development of a "normal" sense of humor to the encouragement of sadistic and violent tendencies. Even when the feature film commenced, with its instant versions of classic literature, the Progressives complained. The new movies were simply too strong a force, growing too fast, to be able to be scientifically molded in any reasonable way.

No matter that these complaints of the nature and influence of the movies upon the children of the USA were themselves little more than hasty generalizations (not scientific conclusions of any sort). They did indicate that many citizens of the United States, especially leaders in social work, education and religion, had become greatly concerned about the movies early on, a concern that continued until television in the 1950s replaced the movies as *the* mass media threat.

One solution seemed to lie in attempting to take over filmmaking and film exhibition. For example, during the 1910s Jane Addams began her own rival movie house, showing educational films. Balaban & Katz suffered no loss in business. After several attempts, Jane Addams dropped the idea of running rival movie houses, and suggested that the cities of the USA initiate municipally run theaters, under the direction of city museum boards and school districts. There educators could program for the benefit of children who could know no better. This too was not widely adopted. Popular Hollywood films seen in Balaban & Katz settings overwhelmed any educational movie fare offered in the classroom or museum. Such failures only frustrated the Progressives, and made them try harder to look for ways "to control the movies."

The issue of race came to the forefront when D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) proved to be the New Hollywood's first **blockbuster**. Before that film opened in 1915 the opponents of the movies had to point to scattered evidence of the evils of the new medium. But with the premiere and playing of that film throughout 1915, detractors and defenders of the medium acknowledged its power. Within four days of the opening of the film, the National Association of Colored People announced that it intended to wage a fight against what it considered a racist portrait of black men and women. This only drew more people to see the film and inflamed the controversy.

When the film opened in Boston, protestors demanded it be stopped. The president of Harvard denounced it; Griffith felt it necessary to publish a booklet *The Rise and Fall of Free Speech in America* to defend himself. He would make *Intolerance* (1916) the following year to explore the subject of morals and free speech in four different cultures. Whichever side one took, the movies were beginning to move from the periphery of American culture to the center of public debate. With Balaban & Katz's exhibition strategies, analyzed above, the exhibition of movies moved to the core of popular culture in the USA.

Balaban & Katz's movie palaces dampened the many fears. The early nickelodeons were simply reconstructed vacant stores, put together with little regard for ventilation, safety or sanitary conditions. With the Central Park Theater, Balaban & Katz designed theaters for safety. The movie exhibitor did not want any negative publicity about unsanitary, dangerous movie palaces. There were few real health problems

Blockbuster refers to a highly popular and profitable movie with big stars in it (but it can also refer to a very popular book or theater play). The term denotes super-hit movies rather than those which drew ordinary audiences.

in America's movie houses after 1917. The nation's theaters all closed in the fall of 1918 with the national **Spanish flu pandemic**, but then Balaban & Katz and fellow exhibitors were praised for their quick response to the national health threat. The Progressives then dropped the charge of "unhealthfulness" from their attacks on movies.

Thereafter the debate about the effect of the movies on youth centered on what the movies showed. Progressives asserted that movies taught improper morals and codes of conduct in their stories. Lawmakers allied with the Progressive movement – in every legislative forum, from cities to states to the United States House of Representatives and United States' Senate – pushed for legal censorship. At least prior restraint (and elimination of offending scenes) would mitigate the lessons taught by Hollywood story-telling. Gone would be scenes of crime and delinquency, sexual freedom license, and misinformation about what was proper behavior by movie watchers.

The Spanish flu pandemic was the deadliest attack of disease in modern times. It started in Spain and spread through Europe and North America in 1918–1919.

THE COMING OF SOME CENSORSHIP

Progressive forces could not stop the movies, so they settled for content control. This struggle for local, state, and national censorship began in February 1915 when the United States Supreme Court declared movies different from other forms of expression. Live speech and printed articles were protected from prior restraint by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The United States Supreme Court wrote: "the exhibition of motion pictures is a business, pure and simple, originated and conducted for profit." The Court asserted that the first amendment right of free expression did not extend to a circus, and so why would it extend to a motion picture. So from 1915 until overturned in 1952, motion pictures could be censored by any local, state, or even the United States federal government.

Progressive reformers defended censorship of the movies because they agreed with this business explanation, and saw movies as an exploitation of the masses, not a means of free speech and debate. More than 90 cities, from New York to Milwaukee, would eventually embrace this argument, and before 1920 would establish local controls over the movies. Yet even a law in Chicago did nothing to constrain the growth of Balaban & Katz. Abe and Barney Balaban, the oldest Balaban brothers, and Sam Katz worked with the Chicago city superintendent of police to gain needed permits for the exhibition of movies in Balaban & Katz's ever popular movie palaces.

More threatening were boards created by the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas, Maryland, Virginia, and New York. But Adolph Zukor worked with these state boards and produced movies whereby blocks of controversial scenes could be cut with little disruption of the narrative. For Virginia, where the state censorship board nearly always cut out scenes of African Americans and whites socializing, Paramount made sure that this was seen only in certain sequences that could be trimmed.

At the same time, a handful of Progressives proposed and fought for federal censorship legislation. This Adolph Zukor absolutely did not want. So in March 1922 Zukor and his fellow movie moguls hired Will H. Hays to lead a cooperative organization to prevent such a national censorship law from happening. In March 1922, Adolph Zukor created an association of all producer-distributors called the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association with Will Hays, who had helped elect the current US president, Warren G. Harding, at its head. Hays's first job was to end any serious discussion of censorship by the US federal government. In 1922 Hays was one of the most famous public figures of his day. He used his contacts in Washington, DC and friendship with the President to quash any serious discussion of federal censorship during the 1920s.

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Hollywood had been labeled “sin city” because of what the Progressives considered the improper behavior of movie stars. This also was an era when the Ku Klux Klan was gaining power, and fundamentalist preachers such as Billy Sunday were roaming the country preaching hell and damnation for watching improper movies and supporting sinful stars. Aroused by these voices – and fresh from their triumph of adding prohibition against alcohol to the United States’ constitution – Progressive voices began to call for a federal commission to oversee the movies or at least censor them on a national level.



2.16 Will Hays with Cecil B. DeMille and Jesse Lasky, c. 1922.

Will H. Hays accepted a salary of more than \$100,000 per year (plus an unlimited expense account) to end any serious discussion of federal censorship. Hays called on his friends Presidents Warren G. Harding (1921–1923) and Calvin Coolidge (1923–1929) to help him. Harding paid back his friend Will H. Hays by immediately squashing any censorship proposals on the national level. Once Harding died in August 1923, his vice president Calvin Coolidge succeeded him. In 1920 Hays had helped Coolidge gain the nomination for vice president and then in 1924 Hays helped Coolidge gain election as President of the United States on his own. Coolidge helped Hays continue to suppress any serious consideration of federal censorship of movies.

If connection to the White House helped Hays on the federal level, in 1922 Hays went immediately to work, using his political clout to help turn aside an impending new censorship law in the state of Massachusetts. Hays (and Zukor) reasoned if they could turn back a new state law, then this would discourage other states from seeking to establish new state censorship boards. Hays sent an army of political operatives to Massachusetts and was able to force a public referendum on the issue. Through shrewd manipulation of the press and other forces of public opinion, Hays convinced the voters of Massachusetts to reject the proposed law by a two to one margin. Thereafter, Hays was able to use the same arguments and political muscle to turn back censorship bills pending in 22 other state legislatures.

To move to the positive, Hays then created a formal Public Relations arm of his Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association to deal with the religious groups, educational organizations, and other parties so concerned with the presumed negative influence of the movies. Hays himself became the nationally known spokesperson in the positive publicity effort to make Hollywood a symbol of American success. Hays spoke before countless groups trying to convince them that the movies could be used positively. He was a skillful speaker and more than held his own in tangles with reformers and bible belt conservatives.

Hays also proved successful in improving relationships within the movie business itself. With the full backing of Adolph Zukor, Hays instituted efficient and uniform business relations among producers, distributors, and exhibitors. Specifically he pushed for the introduction of standardized exhibition and distribution contracts, and arbitration procedures to settle disputes between distributors and exhibitors. In 1927 he established the Copyright Protection Bureau to register the growing number of titles of feature films.

Hays also worked hard to improve labor relations, albeit with a favorable tilt toward management. These efforts resulted in a company union – the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1927. Today the Academy is world famous as the organization which gives out the Oscars, but it began as a company-sponsored forum for resolving labor disputes, and would service that need through the prosperous 1920s. Once the Great Depression struck, however, serious unions were formed in Hollywood and the Academy reverted to largely ceremonial functions.

HOLLYWOOD TAKING ITS PLACE IN SOCIETY

By 1925 the US motion picture industry stood as one of the larger cultural industries in the country with an investment of over one billion dollars, principally in theater buildings and properties. To make the necessary films, distribute them around the world, and present them in theaters in the United States and Canada, a handful of important companies began to dominate. These major corporations, with studios in Hollywood and beyond and offices in New York City, formed corporate Hollywood, with a power that the Motion Picture Patents Company could only dream of.

On top were the “Big Three” of Famous Players-Lasky, Loew’s (with its more famous production arm, MGM) and First National, in that order of importance. After that came a group of five mid-sized companies led by Fox and Universal, followed by Producers Distributing Corporation, Warner Bros., and Film Booking Office. In a special category of its own, somewhere between the “Big Three” and “Mid-Five” was United Artists, a distributor for the films of its stars. But with United Artists’ close ties to Loew’s (a Schenck brother ran each), UA was a true insider. All these nine companies had international distribution. Most owned theaters. For all intents and purposes these nine companies represented Hollywood to the world.

Corporate Hollywood with its immense production, international distribution and powerful theater chains dictated a strict cycle of film release. The exhibition season began in late August and ran until May. Throughout most of the summer – as in our current TV age – this meant scaling back of attendance and even the closing of some theaters. To feed this schedule, the Hollywood companies sold their array of films in a frenzy which lasted from the preceding March to May. The major months for making movies were from spring through autumn.

The institutional apparatus began with the widely publicized and staged sales conventions to introduce films which were in production, but usually not finished. Hollywood studios liked to make the sales and then make the films. The exhibition season commenced with heavy advertising. Hollywood publicized its work, in this pre-television era, through general interest magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, newspapers and numerous “fan” publications.

But Hollywood, by 1925, relied on more than the 20,000 theaters in the United States for the bulk of its revenues. The foreign market was estimated in total 100 million dollars per year by the mid-1920s, about a third of the expected take of a major film. At the time Hollywood represented an important exporter for the United States, indeed one of the best and brightest parts of an expanding export trade. The new movies even topped such long-term export favorites as paper and electrical supplies.

Hollywood represented the film business to most Americans, but the bulk of the industry’s investment was actually on main street in the form of theaters. The key to understanding the theaters in the United States was that not all were equal. Most of the 20,000 were located in small towns with 5,000 people or less, bringing in very little profit. Hollywood looked to the major cities (100,000 people or more) to garner the

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bulk of their monies. These big cities had less than a quarter of the theaters, but recorded more than half the patrons and even a greater share of the dollar intake. In 1925, on average half the patrons for movie theaters in the USA could be found attending movie palaces in 79 cities with populations of more than 100,000 people. In other words, half the movie patrons attended only a fifth of the theaters.

And by-and-large these very theaters were owned by Hollywood companies. They saw no need to buy rural theaters because so little could be made per house. In turn, Hollywood favored its owned and operated theaters with the best films first. Only weeks, often months later, was a small neighborhood house or a theater in a small town able to book the same film. But Hollywood did not care because the studios did not own these small town or neighborhood theaters. So the Hollywood movie moguls made these independent theaters wait.

Indeed, the mid-1920s saw Hollywood's important companies initiate a buying wave, adding to the theaters they had purchased in the early 1920s. Adolph Zukor, as one might expect, kicked off this wave of expansion in the spring of 1925 first with the construction of some 20 major picture palaces, including the flagship in Times Square, New York City. In this Paramount theater building, some 300 feet above the New York City skyline, one found the office of Adolph Zukor. In 20 years Zukor had started a small movie theater, expanded into feature film production with his Famous Plays company, spread distribution of his films around the world through his Paramount distribution, and in fall 1925 took control of Balaban & Katz. As 1925 ended, Zukor renamed the whole production-distribution-exhibition company Paramount – by far the biggest movie company in the world.

And Adolph Zukor's business tactics were copied by others. In 1924 Loew's, Inc. of New York City and owner of several hundred theaters created Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) to make movies for Loew's theaters, and began distributing them around the world. William Fox's smaller company and the business corporation owned by Harry, Abe, Sam and Jack Warner expanded into a Zukor-like studio of production, distribution, and exhibition. But it took bold business operators to try to seek to match Zukor. Smaller Hollywood companies – like Universal Pictures and Columbia Pictures – stuck with production and distribution.

But what were the traits of the silent movies that made Hollywood the filmmaking center of the world? Adolph Zukor had for a decade sponsored the films of Cecil B. DeMille, whose formula was to take the exotic and draw them into American culture. Instead of reforming the external world, DeMille explored the sexuality of marriage in *Old Wives for New* (1918), *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919), *Why Change Your Wife?* (1920), and *Forbidden Fruit* (1921). The movies begin with a bored husband or wife trapped in a routine job or social position. Seeking excitement outside this confinement, he or she would turn to cabarets, jazz music, and/or a foreign lover. The marriage dissolves and the central figure goes out to explore, in the bulk of the film, the excesses of the Roaring Twenties. But in the end he or she remarries and the family remains intact. Indeed the marriage is presumed happier for the experience. These important films were all made within the rigid confines of strict rules as set up by Adolph Zukor. Indeed, DeMille pioneered what has come to be known as the Classic Hollywood Narrative Style, the defining aesthetic standards for cinema around the world. How that style was developed is the subject of the next chapter.

CASE STUDY 2

GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF WHAT AUDIENCES SAW – THE BATTLE OF FILM CENSORSHIP IN GERMANY AND THE USA

When visiting cinema shows became a regular leisure activity, resistance against the new medium grew as well. In the US and Europe anti-film groups tried to curtail film showings and strived for censorship as early as 1905. In many cases local authorities created special committees that censored films to protect the society from subverting influences and bad morals. Because film opponents were often unsatisfied with the judgments of these committees they called for national censorship. Film producers and exhibitors had to deal with these hostilities and depending on the circumstances they succeeded more or less.



2.17 Will Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association of America, 1922–1945.

In Germany World War I (1914–1918) determined the way censorship developed. From 1910 film censorship was centralized in Berlin, meaning that the rulings of the Berlin censors applied to the rest of the country as well. During the war the military authorities were responsible for film censorship and they discovered that film could be used as a means of propaganda. In 1917 the Photograph and Film Office (Bild- und Film-Amt) was established to produce propaganda films.

Germany lost the war and changed from an empire into a Republic in 1919. As a reaction to the state use of film during the war, censorship was abolished. Protest groups, however, strongly lobbied for the return of censorship and in 1920 national censorship was introduced. From then on every film needed a certificate to be shown. Besides the film all publicity material like lobby cards and posters had to be censored as well. It was not allowed to criticize political leaders, to undermine the German state, and public morals should not be offended.

In the US film producers were able to prevent such severe censorship. Only a few state and city censorship laws remained. This was achieved by the skillful maneuvering of former politician Will H. Hays hired by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association in the 1920s.

In the early 1930s, with the coming of the Great Depression, the Hollywood movie studios began to make and distribute movies that offended Roman Catholic authorities, who then pushed for a federal law. Hays organized the studios to self-regulate and in April 1934 created the Production Code Administration. All studios used the Production Code Administration to pre-examine all scripts and approve all releases.

This industry self-regulation worked well as the Roman Catholic authorities backed off. They had helped write the Production Code and were satisfied. So were the few state and local censorship boards, which after 1934 simply approved the decisions of the Production Code Administration.

Indeed the Code authority was funded by the Hollywood studios, who got what they wanted: the elimination of any threat of a federal law.

Many of the censorship dossiers have been kept in archives. The Will Hays papers can be found in the Library of Congress in Washington, in the USA. In Germany the German Film Institute (Deutsches Film Institut) has digitalized 7,000 pages of censorship reports and appeals, and made them accessible through a website. For film historians, examining the development of film censorship is important as it produces an understanding of film cultures developed in different circumstances.

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CHAPTER 3

HOLLYWOOD ESTABLISHES THE CLASSICAL NARRATIVE STYLE

Introduction

The nature of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style

“The director’s stamp”

D. W. Griffith

Cecil B. DeMille

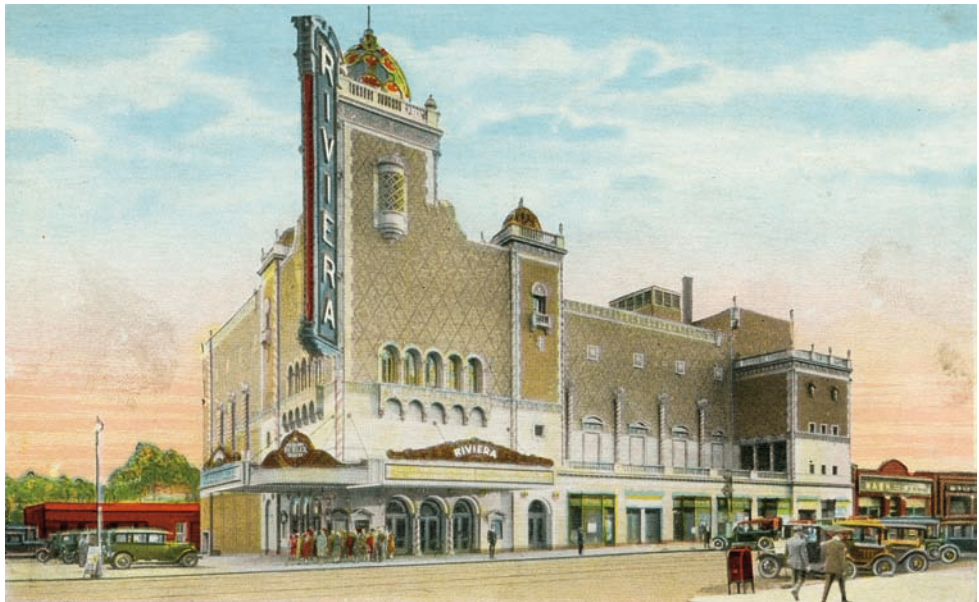
The Hollywood professionals

The comic stylists

Transplanted Europeans

The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style and sound

*Case study 3: The acceptance of the Classical Hollywood
filmmaking style*



3.1 Riviera Theater.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the Hollywood industry taking over the world as analyzed in the last chapter, Hollywood style of the proper movie also established a world standard – this became known as the Classical Narrative Style. This chapter begins by outlining the traits of this style, which seems to most fans as the proper way to make movies. In fact many possible alternatives could have been developed. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style in the silent film era included certain (usually unstated) rules for proper methods for using editing, camerawork, and mise-en-scène (acting, backgrounds, sets, and locations).

By the 1920s, all Hollywood films told stories. This norm of proper story-telling started in the 1910s and this chapter covers the most celebrated early directors of feature-length films: D. W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille. It then analyzes directors who created professional work, but did not become famous at the time: John Ford, King Vidor, William Wellman, Raoul Walsh, and Frank Borzage. Well-known comics – Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton – also directed their own feature films, starring themselves.

In their pioneering book, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (1985) forcefully argue that 1921 was the year in which the consolidation of Hollywood's industrial characteristic approach to visual story-telling became dominant. Before Classical Hollywood Cinema emerged, the dominant approach to shooting a scene was the tableau technique. Action was played out in a full shot, as if the camera was sitting in the center row of a theater filming a play. Gradually filmmakers experimented and inserted close-ups of important details. So, for example, a close-up of an actor could be edited in to highlight a certain detail.

We shouldn't think of the tableau technique as purely "theatrical." For one thing, the **master shot** was typically closer and more tightly organized than a scene on the stage would be. Gradually filmmakers began to manipulate composition, depth, and blocking in ways not available on the stage. As films became longer, Hollywood-based filmmakers were instructed from audience feedback to organize their plots around

A master shot is the recording of an entire scene. After the master shot is filmed, parts of the scene can be filmed again from another angle or from a closer distance. In the cutting room these shots are put together.

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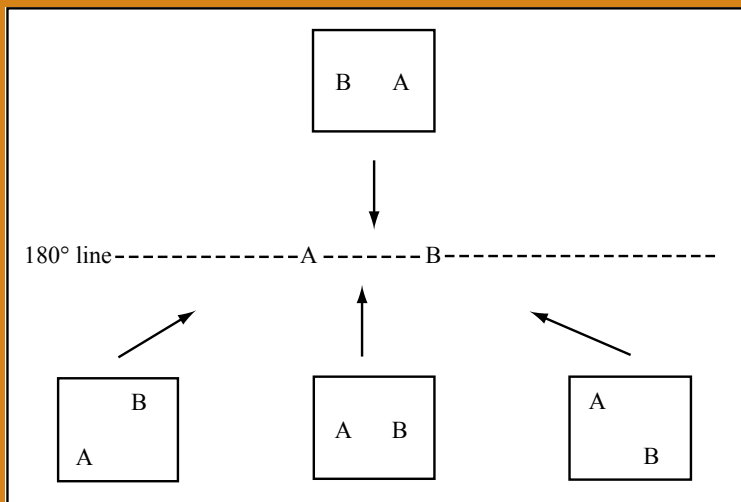
characters, each with conflicting goals – that is they adapted feature films to tell longer and more complex stories.

Studio heads and their filmmakers found that audiences flocked to stories with two lines of action, at least one involving romance. It was remarkable that the Hollywood studios could effectively adapt a new story-telling catalog of techniques – the film's style – in such a short period of time. Sporadically, filmmakers in many countries were exploring ways to build scenes out of multiple shots. By the early 1920s, Hollywood filmmakers had synthesized these tactics into an overall strategy, a system for staging, shooting, and cutting shots into an audience-pleasing feature film.

Once you break a scene into several shots, some characters won't be onscreen all the time. So you need to be clear about where off-screen characters are; you need to supply cues that allow the audience to infer their positions. So during the 1910s, Hollywood filmmakers developed various ways of "matching" shots. One approach was to use the "eyeline match" to connect shots.

For example, after a master shot of two characters, the filmmaker can follow with a separate shot of each one. The director can connect them as having character A look toward character B, and we are shown character B. After some action, character B can look back toward character A and the director will cut to character A. These "eyeline matches" provide continuity for the audience. Their bodily positions and looks remind viewers that characters are near each other and not in some other space.

An eyeline is an imaginary line that connects the character with what he is looking at. If in shot 1 the character is shown looking at something, then in shot 2 the object he is looking at should be in the same eyeline. This is called an eyeline match.



180-degree rule diagram

The 180-degree line ensures that characters are always displayed in the same relative position. Notice that on one side of the line characters A and B are always positioned as A to the left and B to the right independently of the angle of the camera (the three boxes in the lower part of the drawing). As soon as the camera crosses the 180-degree line A and B are in a different relative position: A to the right and B to the left (the box in the upper part of the drawing). When the camera crosses the 180-degree line in the middle of a scene – and thus the characters seemed to have changed their positions – the viewer gets confused.

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In addition, Hollywood's "180-degree rule" required Hollywood filmmakers to break a scene into several shots, taken from different distances and angles, but shot all from one side of an imaginary line slicing through the space. Around 1921, this stylistic approach came to dominate Hollywood feature films, making the film invisibly continuous. These and other norms – violated only with great risk – remain in place to this day, and are learned as the "natural" way to make a movie story.

To understand the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style we need some terms of analysis. To many, the aesthetic analysis of film history means the identification and evaluation of great cinematic works. Instead we propose to examine how the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was adapted to changing audience tastes.

On a broader level, style serves the general organization of the film. For Hollywood this means to tell a story (a narrative). Since Hollywood has so long denoted story as the proper structure, we can focus on the different kinds of stories the Hollywood studios have chosen to create. Groups of similar stories have become known as genres, meaning "kinds" in French.

Finally, more abstractly, the elements of style and story, and the genre of the movie lead to questions of changing themes: the general ideas incorporated into a film. For example, Hollywood has long stressed the unity of the family and the happy resolution of familial problems as proper themes. In contrast some experimental non-Hollywood filmmakers have stressed themes of the disorganization and discontinuity of the world.

So filmmakers learned to work within this system. For example, directors like John Ford specialized in westerns and then thematically treated the clash and confrontation of different cultures (European versus native USA), often not noticed with the first viewing. Historians have studied how different themes have helped define certain periods of cinematic history.

THE NATURE OF THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE STYLE

To keep the product flowing and the theaters full, Hollywood needed a regular source and style of films. Each one should be different enough to attract millions of patrons, and still be easily understood and turned out at the lowest possible cost. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style offered a unique artistic mode of cinematic practice, one which thrived within the industrial conditions described in the previous chapter. With Hollywood, beginning in the late 1910s, we have a set of norms upon which an industry and its audiences agreed upon. So, for example, a filmmaker could light a scene with high or low lighting to underscore the action of the story. If a filmmaker made the screen go black, this cued the audience that a new major part of the plot was coming up. Likewise the length of a shot had to be motivated by the story, and not so short that the audience could not process the information, nor too long that they grew weary.

Considering all the choices a filmmaker had access to – even in the era of silent cinema – there existed thousands of alternatives within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, but always Hollywood filmmakers worked to make popular films in order to retain the possibility of continued work. It took great skill to select shots and film quickly and efficiently. Indeed to keep costs as low as possible, all films are shot out of order, and then reassembled by an editor. The director must create shots with a set of cues so that the editor can assemble a continuous movie. Often the information in these shots was redundant so the viewer could easily follow the story. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was developed as a standardized yet flexible formula.

HOLLYWOOD ESTABLISHES THE CLASSICAL NARRATIVE STYLE

Hollywood films never lacked aesthetic value. Indeed filmmakers working within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style must be judged in terms of the skill in using the established norms, and when possible the ability of the filmmaker to modify the rules in a complex, intense, and unified way. Narrative causality always ruled; the cinema had to be manipulated to tell a story.

By the early 1920s spectators and filmmakers alike came to the Hollywood story film with a set of expectations. Characters acted in a certain way; action and problems introduced in the beginning would be fully resolved by the end; the story flowed along in a manner which tried to hold the audience's interest. Hollywood had to convince the public to attend its stories, rather than rely on those found in books, newspapers or magazines, or in the theater. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style would define the aesthetics of what audiences expected, and provide the norms by which movie makers fashioned their stories on film.

To fully understand the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, consider some basic terms. First, there is the distinction between a plot (the series of actions seen on the screen in real time), and the story (the chain of events audience members reconstructed as cause–effect relationships). Viewers were expected to make sense of the story by inferring events and actions not shown and linking what they see (the plot) and what they do not see so as to engage themselves in a story. So, for example, within the two-hour film we do not need to see every action of the detective as we infer the (unseen) driving to visit the next possible witness or other actions that occur that are not related but are essential to solving the mystery. Filmmakers in Hollywood have long struggled to fashion interesting stories within an unwritten length of at first 90 minutes and later longer – rarely more than 120 minutes. What should be shown, what could be left out in the plot? A two-hour feature film could not show and tell everything. Viewers came to appreciate filmmakers who could entertainingly construct stories which told enough to hold interest, but did not show too much.

Since the 1920s Hollywood has used the characters to hold stories together. These characters need not even be human (for example Lassie or R2-D2). What makes them characters in Hollywood stories are a set of traits. A major character is expected to be good looking, possess wit and keen insight, and go through a series of challenging adventures. A minor character need only be identified by body type or a certain costume. Major characters for Hollywood must have enough interesting traits to propel the story along.

If the character does something “out-of-character,” it is because we are just learning of a new trait. However, such traits must be consistent with what we have come to expect. For example, detectives must be logical individuals who can piece together evidence which others fail to understand. He or she need not look like Sherlock Holmes, yet the film will not ring true unless the characters act a certain consistent way.

The characters in the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style are placed in situations, which, after some conflicts, trials and tribulations, are resolved. The story ought to hold interest until the action is resolved. There are certain Hollywood forms that work even when we know the end. For example, in a western, conventionally the hero always triumphed over the villain. Yet people flocked to westerns. That was to see how the hero would triumph. In other words they wanted to know through what actions, in what order, with what twists and turns would the filmmaker resolve the narrative, even though they knew the outcome.

Within this now familiar use of characters in stories, Hollywood evolved a set of norms for the use of cinematic time and space. The plot flowed along in real time, running long enough to not be called a short. Some films might run longer. Movie exhibitors classified a movie as a feature film because it was not a short. The story, however, could roam across days, months, years, even centuries. For example, the oft-told story of the life of Jesus lasted more than 30 years, but has been told on screen in slightly over two hours.

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The plot cannot possibly relate every event in the story, and it is part of the Hollywood filmmaker's art to manipulate "story time" to hold the audience's interest.

Within this scheme of story and plot, the Hollywood filmmaker had a great range of possibilities for manipulating time and space. For the detective film, we expect a crime to be revealed near or at the beginning, and then a detective seeks clues and searches for information. The detective always solves the case in the end. So the end of the Hollywood detective film has closure; Hollywood story-tellers sought to tie up all loose ends in their stories. The fate of each major character, the answer to each important question or problem, the outcome of each significant conflict – all had to be resolved.

The filmmaker could also play with time. In a familiar example, the story could be told in flashback. The filmmaker might advance the story by showing actions of the past. We might even have a flash forward, relating action in the future. In whatever combination, the filmmaker was required to provide cues to indicate what has been skipped over or on to. The manipulation of time gave filmmakers a plethora of variables with which to play.

The filmmaker can also manipulate space. Events in the plot occur in a locale, which we have come to call the setting. We even associate certain characters with certain settings. Sherlock Holmes plied his trade in foggy London, Superman in a New York-like Metropolis, Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara in the American South. If editing is associated with the manipulation of time, it is the camerawork and mise-en-scène with which we associate the manipulation of cinematic space. Normally in the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style movie the setting is established early on, and then the characters play out their actions within that arena.

The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style assumes that characters serve as the agents of action within the story. Physical changes such as hurricanes or snow storms motivate storylines. Likewise while changes in society, wars or economic transformations can serve as catalysts for action, the center of the story rests with the decisions, choices and actions of a finite set of characters. Often the film begins with an enigma or problem which affects the life of the major character. He or she then wants to solve the crime, escape, or do something to reach a certain, defined goal. The goal cannot be reached until the narrative is over. There are forces of opposition to the central character's desire; actions are necessary to reach the desired conclusion. So the criminal must be caught, the enemy defeated, the evil land-grabbing rancher brought to justice. Order must be restored. The active, goal-oriented protagonist is at the center of the Hollywood version of story-telling, often motivated by certain psychological traits of compulsion or desire.

The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style subjugates actions by characters, and camerawork, to an order called continuity editing. The physical break between the hundreds of shots which make up a feature film could be disturbing, ever interrupting the flow of the story. In the years before the First World War filmmakers in Hollywood developed ways to stitch together the story as coherently and clearly as possible. The purpose was (and is) to provide a smooth flow from shot to shot, scene to scene, sequence to sequence. The graphical, rhythmic, spatial and temporal relations in time were molded to come up with a system which seemed to make each shot flow smoothly into the next.

Thus, graphically the shots had to match. If a space was specified, it could not be "jumbled up" unless there was some motivation in the plot. Indeed once a locale was established, then continuity was maintained until the scene was over. Figures and props were balanced in the frame, and the lighting remained constant, highlighting the central characters. Shots should be held long enough to provide crucial information. If we have a **long shot** (in the distance) to establish the action, the shot must be held on the screen far longer than the shot of a face of a familiar character.

Using a special lens, the long shot can situate characters in relationship with each other in filmic space.

A long take means that the shot lasts more than 30 seconds, sometimes two minutes in duration.

HOLLYWOOD ESTABLISHES THE CLASSICAL NARRATIVE STYLE

Hollywood filmmakers developed a series of guidelines to preserve the continuity of space. We are expected to see the action from the same side of a 180-degree line; to cross over that imaginary line would violate continuity of background space within a scene. If this rule was broken, we might see ever “new backgrounds” behind the characters, and become disoriented as to precisely where they were. By preserving this central axis, the filmmaker was required to be sure that when characters moved they did so in the same general direction. All rules about the proper use of cinematic space sought to ensure that the story flowed along without disruption, that characters were ever the center of our focus. The viewer should not be distracted by the mechanics of filmmaking, once he or she had learned the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style rules.

With Hollywood’s growing power around the world after the end of the First World War, the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style gradually began to stand for the “proper” look for a movie. Other combinations of editing, camerawork and mise-en-scène were seen as mistakes. This single possibility, among many, became the dominant mode of movie making in the world. Other possibilities can then be seen as distinct alternatives posed in opposition to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. Thus it is “Classical” because it has dominated world filmmaking for so long. It is “Hollywood” because it was developed by the Hollywood film industry.

It was only gradually that the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style became the standard. This coincided with rise of the studio system which organized a set of procedures whereby filmmakers created scripts which laid out the plan for the plot, others shot the film, while others assembled the final copy, all under the supervision of studio managers. The studio system was as much a set of buildings and necessary equipment as it was a particular organization of labor into the specialties of script writers, unit managers, art directors, electricians, cinematographers, and editors, to name a few of the sub-specialties. In the years following the end of the First World War, Hollywood perfected a strict division of labor involving hundreds of workers, most of whom were not known to the general public. These were the thousands of unknown studio employees who followed the orders of the producers who supervised their projects.

This Classical Hollywood Narrative Style in the silent movie era used titles to denote dialogue, to establish action, and help characters express themselves. As these silent movies became more complex, more and more dialogue titles came into use. Quotation marks and the movement of lips before cutting to the title signaled the audience that important words were about to be spoken, and we should pay attention. The goal of the silent Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was to relate important dialogue in as clever a way as possible. Noted screenwriter Anita Loos popularized the idea that inter-titles could contribute to the art of the film, and with her titles for D.

W. Griffith’s *Intolerance* (1916) she provided jokes, elaborate descriptions, even asides. Loos continued in this tradition with the popular comedies of Douglas Fairbanks: *Reaching for the Moon* (1917) and *Wild and Woolly* (1917). Titles were painted onto backgrounds in what came to be referred to as the “art title” card.

Acting styles were also adapted to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. With cause–effect narration supplying much of the impetus of the story, the sweeping pantomime gestures of the silent cinema gave way to more subtle, restrained gestures and facial movements. The secret was to have enough



3.2 *Intolerance* (D. W. Griffith, 1916).

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exaggeration but not too much. Better lighting plus improved film stocks and filmic make-up made it easier for the viewer to appreciate subtle gestures, even when the camera was in medium or long shot.

Editing rules were needed to make the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style work efficiently. The long shot established the scene; cutting analyzed its action. Indeed by 1917 the long shot as establishing shot was so formulaic that it could be played with in comic fashion. In *Wild and Woolly* one scene begins with a medium shot of the Fairbanks hero dressed in cowboy attire, sitting in an Indian tepee. Later in the scene we learn that he is actually in his bedroom, far from the old west.



3.3 Scenes from *Wild and Woolly* (John Emerson, 1917). What looks like a tepee in an open field (1) turns out to be a tepee standing in a room (2). Douglas Fairbanks acts like a cowboy and catches Judson (the butler) (3).

The shift to the Classical Hollywood cinema also saw movie makers stage scenes in depth. Painted backdrops gave way to authentic-looking props and sets increasingly photographed in deep focus, with appropriate lighting and center framing of the important action. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style demanded a series of beautifully framed and lit shots, stitched one after another, rather than one expensive, elaborate tracking shot. Indeed during the 1910s establishing and re-establishing shots, cut-ins, consistent screen direction, shot/reverse shots, crosscutting and matching looks and action were set into play. Such techniques permitted the plot to proceed in clearly defined sets of space, while making the story flow in a coherent, lively fashion. Story-telling, through editing, was honed to a precise, consistent, and efficient set of practices.

The Hollywood industry subdivided the work of making movies into sub-specialties including the art director, an editor and assistants, a cinematographer and assistants, and so on. Through the 1920s the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style became ever more solidified and accepted.

The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style system would continue to survive (indeed prosper) with the introduction of sound. Hollywood quietly and completely incorporated other technological transformations as well. Certain film stocks captured the yellows and reds better than others; an apparatus called a **Moviola** enabled rapid editing and replaced simple cutting with scissors and a light box. The Moviola also made it easier to adhere to the rules of matching on action and maintaining story continuity.

How did silent movies carry the viewer from scene to scene? If we want to know how mainstream movies take us from scene to scene, we start by acknowledging three different levels of architecture. First, we can consider our film as having large-scale parts. Call this the macrostructure – the way those bigish parts fit together. We might treat reel lengths as the salient parts, as silent filmmakers did – as the feature-length movies were called multiple reelers. So, for example, the traditional conception of a three-act structure depends on the main characters choosing goals, being blocked in achieving them, and at the climax decisively achieving them or not.

At a lower level, we can think of the film as having midsize parts, usually called scenes or sequences. These parts, usually 30 in a feature, are tied together in particular ways. Typically the scenes develop and connect

With the Moviola it was possible to view the cuts the editor had made with the same machine instead of having to put the edited film in a film projector. This saved an enormous amount of time and money and the machine was an instant success.

through short-term chains of cause and effect. Characters formulate specific plans, react to changing circumstances, gain or lose allies, make appointments, act under deadlines, and otherwise take specific steps toward or away from their goals. Part of the screenwriter's craft is to find ways to fit the short-term actions into the overarching movement toward resolution.

Well-constructed plots interweave various elements from earlier scenes into the development of later scenes. Appointments and deadlines illustrate this strategy. So does a causal chain that is left unresolved in one scene – it's called “a dangling cause,” and was very common in Hollywood dramaturgy. Because of this weaving of causes and effects, we might best call this midlevel architecture the level of plot coherence: each scene is designed to advance the action and also to develop or tie off lines of activity set off earlier.

A third, still finer-grained level of organization is what we'll call microstructure. This is the tangible, moment-by-moment texture, conceived as a pattern of images and titles in the silent era. For example, within a scene, we often find patterns of cutting – an establishing shot, reverse angles, close-ups, and so on – meshed with the developing titles. Likewise, in action sequences, cutting, composition, point of view, title-image interaction, and the like carry the discrete developments of the action, which we intuitively pull into a larger unit. We learn this by the experience of watching films and then trying to give meaning to the images on the screen.

Global macrostructure, midlevel plot coherence, and microstructure: we can study a film's narrative at any of these levels. Most scene transitions facilitate the first and second levels of unity. In many films, a fade to black marks the end of a macro unit. At the midrange level of coherence, the end of one scene and the beginning of another will often be marked by a new establishing shot. In the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, the title and image texture link a specific causal element at the end of one scene to that at the very start of the next. Scene A ends with a question; scene B opens with the answer. This is the usual way in which a hook is used, though we'll see that principles of continuity or contrast can work as well. In the end, narrative continuity dominated all other cinematic devices.

Hollywood – with its industrial strength – initiated a change in stylistic history by defining a “proper” scheme to make it easy for audiences to follow the story. The rules were approved by the owners of the studios because they worked to make films quickly and efficiently, and made them attractive to audiences in most places in the world. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was no conspiracy, but a means that helped all the Hollywood movie studios to make as much profit as possible. This was no assembly line whereby all movies were the same. They had to follow the rules as well as create something slightly different – something new – something attractive. This was the job of the film director.

“THE DIRECTOR'S STAMP”

The most influential argument for differentiation within the Classical Hollywood system emphasizes the role of the director. To locate a specific set of stylistic techniques, manipulations of the story and plot, and considerations of complex themes is to seek to understand the tendencies of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. The director, however rebellious, always worked within the Classical Hollywood Narrative norms. He or she may have pushed and pulled a bit, yet never enough to “break the rules.” If he or she did, it then became impossible to find work.

Some directors manipulated stylistic elements, others the story elements, some both. Although the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style had a finite set of rules, it permitted a nearly infinite set of possible strategies

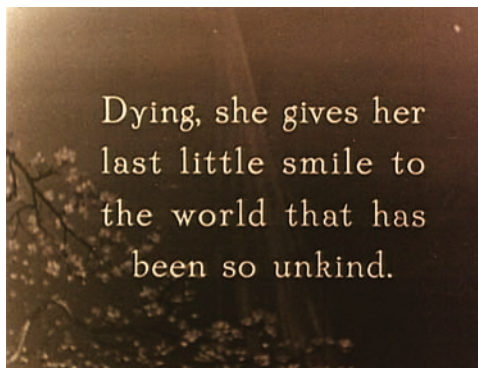
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within those rules. The system could even be violated momentarily, then quickly things had to “return to normal.” The directors discussed below have one trait in common. They all learned their craft as the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was being perfected, and in their own individual way proved that the system was still subtle enough to accommodate individual looks.

D. W. GRIFFITH

David Wark Griffith is most often credited as the first notable Hollywood director. And in his heyday (1914 through 1920) Griffith certainly did emphasize some norms of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, but his directorial glory proved short-lived because he never adapted completely to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. While he was the most famous director to the movie-going public in 1921, they rejected his post-1921 efforts. By 1931 he was a Hollywood outcast. Griffith certainly pioneered a new form of acting; he proved film had social effects – negative as well as positive. In the end, however, Griffith pioneered elements of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, yet failed to adapt to the studio system of the 1920s and thus faded from importance.

Griffith was probably the first director to employ foreground narration in Hollywood, particularly in his early features. Through the power of historical stories, he voiced his view of the world. Indeed he was one of a number of pioneers who carefully experimented with the emerging rules. He and his cameramen Billy Bitzer and Henrik Sartov gave the world soft photography in *Broken Blossoms* (1919). The softening of the images of Lillian Gish and the gauzy shots at first posed a distinct alternative to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style; soon other directors made soft focus a part of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.



3.4 Lillian Gish in *Broken Blossoms* (D. W. Griffith, 1919).

Griffith's contributions to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style were limited. Directors were inspired by Griffith, yet so as not to lose their jobs they did not follow his inability to adapt to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. Indeed with *Way Down East* in 1920 and *Broken Blossoms* a year earlier, Griffith directed his last important films. His final films were too often simply routine studio works. That was precisely the problem. Griffith could not, like Cecil B. DeMille or other Hollywood professionals, adapt and make complex, popular works within Hollywood's rules.

CECIL B. DEMILLE

Within the development of Classical Hollywood Narrative Style more importance should be attached to a director like Cecil B. DeMille, then ace director for Paramount – the top company in Hollywood. DeMille worked within the rules, and made world famous films. To the public DeMille represented the archetypical imperial, Germanic director; to the men running Famous Players he made them millions and millions of dollars turning out films from many different genres. Indeed working for Famous Players, a company in which he had a hand in creating, DeMille helped fashion the fundamental rules for the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. If Griffith finally rejected the Classical rules, DeMille embraced them. No single individual pioneered the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style; certainly DeMille could be said to have led the way as much as any director.

No DeMille film of the 1910s can be called typical since he was churning out three or four per year. Few had had as much influence at the time as *The Cheat* (1915). Released the same year as the more vaulted *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Cheat* was far more influential within the development of the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

The Cheat offers a melodrama in which a society woman, Mrs. Richard Hardy, attempts to save her husband from financial ruin by borrowing the needed funds from a wealthy Japanese man she knows. He demands sexual favors in return. Mrs. Hardy returns the money, yet this simply enrages him and he brands her on the shoulder with a red-hot iron. Richard Hardy attacks the Japanese man, and in a final court room sequence is about to be judged guilty of this crime when his wife reveals the wound on her shoulder. The husband is acquitted.



3.5 The use of light and shadows in *The Cheat* (C. B. DeMille, 1915).

This is pure Classical Hollywood Narrative Style movie making, highlighted by the subtle acting of stars Fanny Ward and Sessue Hayakawa. Indeed into what could have been a hackneyed melodrama, DeMille added complex lighting, with mottled light and patterns of shadow suggestive of jail bars. Characters are surrounded by smoke, silhouetted behind screens, and appear from nowhere amidst pitch black. This is a tour de force of lighting. In DeMille's hands *The Cheat* became an intricate study of individual responsibility handled with subtlety and sophistication. Though the plot involved the threat of infidelity, for example, the film seems entirely free of sentimentality. In addition, the acting style is remarkably modern, direct but without the sweeping gestures.

With *The Cheat* DeMille showed he was a master of the film narrative. During the remainder of the silent era he made comedies and dramas, capturing an American society in transition. His initial works brought

famous plays to the screen for Famous Players – *The Rose of the Rancho* (1914), *The Girl of the Golden West* (1915), and *The Virginian* (1914). These films starred such proven players as James O'Neil from Broadway, and Geraldine Farrar from the operatic stage. At the end of the First World War came a series of comedies, unlike *The Cheat* in story form, but very similar in faithfulness to the newly established Hollywood rules: *Old Wives for New* (1918), *We Can't Have Everything* (1918), *Male and Female* (1919), and *Saturday Night* (1921).

These early DeMille films proved so popular around the world that DeMille replaced D. W. Griffith as Hollywood's most famous filmmaker. German director Ernst Lubitsch watched and learned from DeMille. In 1923 Lubitsch settled in Hollywood and directed Mary Pickford in *Rosita* (1923) and Florence Vidor in *The Marriage Circle* (1924) and became famous for his comedies of manners. When asked for his directorial inspiration, Lubitsch singled out DeMille. All Hollywood owed DeMille a debt for helping lead the way to an understanding of how to make films which would be popular around the world.

THE HOLLYWOOD PROFESSIONALS

Cecil B. DeMille was hardly the lone successful director working in Hollywood of the silent era. John Ford, King Vidor, William Wellman, Raoul Walsh, and Frank Borzage all worked skillfully in the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style and then went on to make popular films into the 1950s and 1960s. They served as the backbone of the Hollywood studio system, making popular movies within specified genres and then adapted to talkies. They were so skilled at working in the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style that looking back movie historians can see that their movies often seem complex and appealing even decades later.

John Ford grew up with the Hollywood cinema. Early on, his older brother Francis had moved west to work for Universal and John joined him in 1914. For the next three years, the very formative period of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, John Ford apprenticed as an actor, stuntman, and assistant director. In 1917 he was promoted to contract director to fashion low budget westerns for Universal, starring Harry Carey, Sr. Many were praised at the time; only two of ten 1917 westerns Ford made for Universal, *Straight Shooting* and *Bucking Broadway*, have survived. But modern day critics praise this early work as typical of the later John Ford westerns.

In 1921 Ford moved to the Fox Film Company, and added to his growing reputation. *The Iron Horse* (1924), a western spectacular, provided the Fox studio's answer to Paramount's megahit *The Covered Wagon* (1923 – directed by James Cruze). More importantly, *The Iron Horse* established the 30-year-old John Ford's place as a top director in Hollywood. With *The Iron Horse* John Ford directed a western that proved both complex in its use of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style and also appealing as it told the story of how the railroad was built to connect the Eastern USA to the West. Ford also hinted that the railroad caused disruption in the establishment of communities along its path, a questioning of manifest destiny that Ford would explore for the next 40 years.



3.6 *The Iron Horse* (John Ford, 1924).

In John Ford's silent films, movie historians can see the development of the style of a Hollywood master director – who would make his final film in 1966. Ford composed with a formality, a symmetry that would seem to be expected from a filmmaker who valued order in society. Ford's images seem to be neatly

bisected by tent poles, hitching rails, gateways, and rail lines, all working to engender a set of visual delights within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. Movie historians also see an emerging interest in formal events which link men and women to society. Even non-ritualized activities frequently are turned into rituals through careful positioning and framing of characters within complex settings. For instance, in John Ford's *Three Bad Men* (1926 – Fox) there is a sequence in which one of the central characters carries his dead sister down the stairs of a saloon. This act is turned into a funeral rite through careful framing, composition and lighting.

King Vidor made his reputation filming a hit silent movie *The Big Parade* (1925) and became MGM's top director. Produced by MGM's legendary studio boss, Irving Thalberg, *The Big Parade* became one of the biggest hits of 1925, playing as a special attraction for weeks on end. *The Big Parade* is remembered as the first popular antiwar film made in Hollywood following World War I. Its story told of a single soldier who experienced the horrors of war. This suited Vidor's interest in exploring the role of the individual within social forces as expressed by elaborate use of mise-en-scène. *The Big Parade* took on its authentic look through carefully recreated studio realism. Vidor was able to make an intimate, moving story on an epic scale.

MGM and Vidor followed with *The Crowd* (1926), which captured the individual trapped in the chaos of the big city. Instead of going to war, this simple tale told of a man who tries to make his way in urban chaos. While considered experimental in 1926, *The Crowd* provides an example of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style – with no glamorous star nor gripping tale of war. As a director King Vidor played it safe with his Classical Hollywood Narrative Style – but stressing an unusual theme. Here was a rare serious effort at capturing the realism of marriage, of a man and woman trying to survive in the modern world. Thalberg would not repeat this as *The Crowd* proved unpopular, and MGM returned director King Vidor to more mainstream efforts such as *Show People* (1928) – Vidor's last silent film. Vidor went on to a successful career in talkies ending in 1959.

William Wellman broke into films through his friendship with the actor Douglas Fairbanks, and directed such popular fare as *The Vagabond Trail* (1924), *The Circus Cowboy* (1924), and *The Cat's Pajamas* (1926), all for United Artists – which in part was owned by Fairbanks, along with his wife Mary Pickford, and Charlie Chaplin (see below). Adolph Zukor was so impressed that he hired Wellman to direct *Wings* (1927) for Paramount, surely the most spectacular war film made during the silent era, and the winner of the first Academy Award. *Wings* made Paramount millions of dollars, and made Wellman one of the most popular directors of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

Zukor allowed Wellman to shoot *Wings* on location in Texas where Wellman recreated World War I battle scenes on the ground, and spectacular airplane fights in the sky. It was the placement of the camera in airplanes (Wellman was a pilot in the First World War) and the carefully staged air battles which in the months before and after Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic captured the public's imagination. The story is of two boyhood pals who become pilots, experience a war, and fall in love with the same woman – fabled star Clara Bow. While the story seems routine in later viewings, Wellman staged spectacular battle scenes within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style with the use of the complex camerawork. In one shot, for example, Wellman had 28 airplanes flying everywhere. This could all be done with computer graphics by the twenty-first century; in the 1920s it was a massive logistical operation.

And with so much action going on in single shots, Wellman matched on action so skillfully that audiences had no trouble keeping the action straight. Wellman knew the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style so well that he was able to shoot it so that editors working for Paramount could easily assemble *Wings*. It is a pity that *Wings* and *Beggars of Life* (1928) proved to be the lone Wellman films to survive the silent era.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Raoul Walsh was a pupil of D. W. Griffith. Yet by the mid-1920s he had surpassed his teacher to become a studio favorite, and would remain on top for nearly 40 years. Walsh was the consummate action director. He reached an initial pinnacle in 1924 with *The Thief of Baghdad*, starring Douglas Fairbanks and released by United Artists. But it was *What Price Glory?* (1926 – Fox) that vaulted Walsh to the top of his profession. *What Price Glory?* proved another among the genre of popular World War I tales of realism which seemed to dominate at the box-office during the mid-1920s. It had been a stage success, yet no one expected a realistic story of two rugged marines brawling over a French girl to work as a movie. Walsh continued his success with *Cock Eyed World* (1929), a sequel to *What Price Glory?*

Frank Borzage began his career directing for Universal, and later worked at Paramount. His *Seventh Heaven* (1927 – Fox), starring Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor, was among the most popular of films of the late 1920s. *Seventh Heaven* won him the award as the best director at the first Academy Awards. Borzage earned his reputation as a director of melodrama. This is a difficult type of story form to work in because it can become so maudlin. Borzage made it big box-office. His melodramas were different from Griffith's because they revolved around spirituality, and the salvation of his characters. He presented inner beauty through exterior expression, and thus a certain type of performer was crucial for his films. Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor were not big stars until Borzage directed them in *Seventh Heaven* (1927) and *Street Angel* (1929) – both for Fox. Borzage would continue working in Hollywood into the 1950s as a master director of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

THE COMIC STYLISTS

It was hard to be too inventive within the Classical Hollywood system. Directors who specialized in comedies had more room for visual experimentation. The comedy tradition had been established in plays for centuries. Their structure was one of confusion and misunderstanding. Hollywood comics often directed their own films – for example Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Still they worked within the system, telling stories. Yet because they were not solving a mystery or dramatic conflict they could play with the rules. Indeed, Chaplin and Keaton were able to inject unexpected comic moments within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. Movie historians have found that they probed and manipulated the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style because the comedy genre permitted a limited amount of carefully constructed breaking with directorial norms. From the beginning, the short comedy sketch had been a standard of the movies. It continued in popularity and was absorbed into the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style during the 1920s.

Charlie Chaplin was undoubtedly one of the greatest stars as the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style began to dominate. Indeed, Chaplin was that rare star who by the 1920s had total control over his work. This English-born vaudevillian came to the United States in 1913 and starred in films of pioneer Hollywood producer **Mack Sennett** for two years. During that time, Chaplin learned all aspects of movie directing. In 1914 Chaplin adopted the costume which made him world famous: the baggy pants, cane, derby hat, oversized shoes, tiny jacket and moustache. Once Chaplin struck out on his own, he became a director-star and through a series of deals progressed to longer films, and more and more control of what he turned out.



3.7 Charlie Chaplin's first appearance as The Little Tramp, in *Kid Auto Races at Venice* (Henry Lehman, 1914).

Mack Sennett (1884–1960) was a film director and producer. He established the Keystone Company in 1912 and made more than 1,000 films. The Keystone Kops was a series of slapstick comedy films about a bunch of nonfunctional police officers.

HOLLYWOOD ESTABLISHES THE CLASSICAL NARRATIVE STYLE

By 1919 Chaplin had become a full partner in the new United Artists studio, and would produce, write, and direct all the films he would make during the next 40 years. He was the cinema's first true international superstar, a filmmaker who caused millions of waiting fans to queue up, while also drawing praise from such normally movie-hating intellectuals as George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells.

Chaplin worked well within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. His first step was to establish a universally loved character, the "Little Tramp." He endowed his beloved tramp with a flexible set of traits he could carefully manipulate through film after film: always the little guy, an easy target for the bullies of the world, but also agile, quick witted and ingenious at fending them off. Through struggle after struggle "the Little Tramp" was able to survive in a mean, cruel world, drawing on the audience's empathy.

The complex Chaplin character began to take shape with *A Dog's Life* (1918) in which he developed social satire by drawing a contrast between the Little Tramp and his faithful mongrel friend. *The Kid* (1920) presented a world of poverty in a contrasting funny and tragic way. Thereafter Chaplin began to turn out his most complex work. *The Gold Rush* (1925) was Chaplin's favorite amongst his own films. The film was inspired by the stories of the ill-fated Donner Expedition where a group heading west in 1847 perished in the snow of the mountains of California while trying to reach the gold fields. Chaplin's Little Tramp nearly freezes to death in pursuit of gold; the starving Little Tramp cooks his own shoe and then carefully tries to eat the shoe. He carefully boils it, constantly testing for tenderness, and then carves it up like a roast, twirling the shoestrings around his fork like spaghetti. This is just one of a string of Chaplin's best comic sequences in the film.

While *The Gold Rush* is filled with comic touches, it is also awash with pathos. When the Little Tramp dreams he is entertaining the elusive girl, he dances with forks as his legs and dinner rolls as oversized feet. Chaplin positions himself with his playful face coyly appearing over the tops of these two dancing legs, creating one of the most memorable images in the entire Chaplin canon.



3.8 Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush* (Charlie Chaplin, 1925).

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Within his series of comedies (which grew longer and more elaborate as his fame steadily grew), Chaplin served up the greatest social criticism Hollywood permitted. (Indeed he would pay later for these misdeeds when not permitted to return to the United States in the 1950s as right-wing politicians stopped his re-entry into the United States.) Chaplin was in the end a director who relied on one of the greatest characters and actors ever – himself. Despite lengthy production schedules and spending money enough for three times as many films, he never fully explored the full range of possibilities of the cinema. He had the most beloved character in the movies and stuck to telling simple stories, straightforwardly following the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

Buster Keaton was considered a silent comic of a lesser rank than Chaplin at the time his films were released. Movie historians who have closely studied the silent films of Buster Keaton have come to view him as one of the great stylists of the cinema. Keaton directed long takes (in time and space) and “stretched” the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style to its limits. Keaton was given considerable freedom since his producer was his brother-in-law Joseph M. Schenck. From 1922 with *Cops* to 1928 with *The Cameraman*, Buster Keaton directed, wrote, and acted in a series of comic masterworks.

Keaton served his filmmaking apprenticeship during the late-1910s, and by 1920 began to make a series of two-reelers under his own name. He displayed an inventive comic wit from the beginning, and many recognize these early shorts as among the greatest of the era – whether the Keaton figure is haunted by bizarre mechanical gadgets (*The Haunted House* in 1921), or is chased by every sort of police character (*Cops*).



3.9 Buster Keaton in *Go West* (Buster Keaton, 1925).

HOLLYWOOD ESTABLISHES THE CLASSICAL NARRATIVE STYLE

From 1923 to 1928 Keaton created a series of two features per year. This regular schedule (compared with Chaplin, who began to take longer and longer breaks between films) resulted in films that seemed simply standard Hollywood fare. Keaton directed himself as many different characters and used familiar stories from feuding mountain families (*Our Hospitality*, 1923) to westerns (*Go West*, 1925) to tales of US Civil War (*The General*, 1926). Keaton could exploit these well-known genres within an ever-struggling Keaton character trying to win the love of some helpless heroine – to construct seemingly endless comic sequences. Using his own extraordinary athletic prowess, in oppressive surroundings and threatening situations, Keaton expressed a visual style built on long takes to record the Keaton character's off-frustrations. In *Seven Chances* (1925) he battles a rock slide; in *The Navigator* (1924) the enemy is a complete (empty) ocean liner; in *Go West* a herd of cattle.

Perhaps most admired by movie historians is Keaton's direction of *Sherlock, Jr.* in which the opponent is Classical Hollywood Narrative Style itself. Buster plays a projectionist who falls asleep and then becomes a character in the film he is showing. He is trapped by unknowing shifts in time and space. In the end he solves the mystery story in the movie he is showing.



3.10 Dream sequence in *Sherlock Jr* (Buster Keaton, 1924).



3.11 Shots from *Our Hospitality* (Blystone / Keaton, 1923).

Keaton will be remembered as the master of the *mise-en-scène*. He used long takes and long shots to take optimal advantage of the great coordination and athletic skill he possessed. In *Our Hospitality* he made complete use of decor, costume, lighting and figures (especially himself) to fashion a complex comedy, one that still fit within the established boundaries of the Hollywood system. In a take-off of the Hatfield versus McCoy's feud (a legendary tale in which neighbors hate each other more than outsiders), Keaton shows himself as Willie McKay (a take-off of McCoy) caught in the on-going family feud as he pursues a Canfield (a take-off of Hatfield) girl. The chases that occur are sparked by the two families each trying to prevent a McKay–Canfield marriage. Keaton directed this story as a comedy of juxtaposition, in costumes and alternations of light and dark – all performed within various planes of the **depth of field**. We constantly see Keaton as McKay in the foreground and his pursuers in the background, all in the same shot yet hidden from

Depth of field is the distance between the first and the last object in a shot that is still shown sharp.

each other. In but one example, Keaton as McKay is sitting on some rocks, a waterfall suddenly washes over and hides him, for just a crucial moment, from his pursuers.

Keaton's films were embraced by mass audiences as simple comedies and not seen as art. Keaton's directorial complexity within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was only praised once movie historians closely examined them and found how complex Keaton's gags were. It was this seeming directorial contradiction – making the complex look simple – that many later movie historians discovered within the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

TRANSPLANTED EUROPEANS

The Hollywood movie moguls also sought to create cinema that would be praised by intellectuals. For this, the Hollywood studio owners hired directors from Europe. In this category we examine two German directors – Ernst Lubitsch and F. W. Murnau. They brought experience from a foreign film industry to a Hollywood which sought the artistic respectability associated with European films. It took a great deal of flexibility for any émigré to survive and prosper as the director had to balance the demands of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style with experiments that will be analyzed in later chapters

At first the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style of filmmaking permitted only occasional tracking, panning, and reframing shots. Such techniques were expensive to shoot. Directing was easier and faster instead if one created carefully balanced and beautifully lit static compositions, and used continuity editing to construct the story. German directors Ernst Lubitsch and F. W. Murnau changed all that; Hollywood directors began to move their cameras as often and as freely as they could with new elevators and cranes to imitate the effects of German films such as F. W. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (*Der letzte Mann*, 1924). Movie mogul William Fox wanted to issue a handful of artistically worthy movies each year and thus in 1927 permitted German Murnau as director to employ multiple camera movements for stunning effect in Murnau's Hollywood debut, *Sunrise* (1927).

Ernst Lubitsch paved the way for Murnau. Born in Berlin, Lubitsch was known for his costume epics starring the Polish “bombshell” Pola Negri. One in particular, *Madame Dubarry* (1919), caught the attention of Mary Pickford who was looking for projects for her own co-owned movie company, United Artists. Pickford tempted Lubitsch to Hollywood to direct her in *Rosita* (1923), an elaborate costume drama. But it was another genre which made his name in the United States. Working for Warner Bros., then a small independent operation, Lubitsch directed five films from 1924 to 1927 which dealt with sexual and psychological relationships in and out of marriage while refraining from conventional moral judgments. This European view was permitted so long as things all came out “correctly” in the end with the wicked being punished.

F. W. Murnau was acclaimed as the next Lubitsch in German Expressionistic movie making. This star director of the German cinema had become a world famous figure when in 1926 William Fox signed him up and brought him to Hollywood. Murnau was a master of light and shadow, of the moving camera. At Fox he received the red carpet treatment: he was allowed to bring over his own screenwriters, cinematographers and other craftspeople from Germany. His team's initial feature, made just before the coming of sound, was the highly regarded *Sunrise* (1927), a touching story of a young farm couple (played by Janet Gaynor and George O'Brien) who make their first trip to the big city. *Sunrise* is a simple, moving tale, complete with some of the most beautiful camera movements ever recorded in a Hollywood film. With such elaborate camerawork, *Sunrise* is justifiably praised as one of the most exquisite movies in Hollywood history. It never

breaks the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, but pushes them to their limits.

Sunrise's mise-en-scène was inspired by the techniques used in Germany (to be analyzed in the next chapter). Murnau made expressive use of light and dark, distorting the mise-en-scène to express emotion and conflict. Subtle oppositions of light and shadow set up the contrasts of good and evil. Light dramatically breaks through into the church when the husband and wife are reconciled in the wedding scene; the artificial light of the amusement park foreshadows the near tragedy of the boating accident; the horror-film-like darkness of the marsh overlays meetings between the husband and his temptress. The title, *Sunrise*, even connoted the predictable ending of this masterwork, as a new day dawns.



3.12 *Sunrise* (F. W. Murnau, 1927).

Sunrise represented the quintessential Hollywood art film of the late silent era. It won an Academy Award for “Artistic Quality of Production,” an award never to be given out again. It also made very little money, and thus Fox supervised Murnau closely for *Four Devils* (1928). Tragically Murnau died in 1931 aged 42. The coming of sound required even more rigid adherence to the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style system, permitting little opportunity to fashion an art film. *Sunrise* could have only been made when Hollywood was riding high, and William Fox had expanded his studio. By 1931 not only was Murnau dead, Fox had also lost his studio. Business failure had pushed out the possibility of artistic respectability. If there is a single film which symbolized the German invasion of Hollywood, it was F. W. Murnau's *Sunrise*.

THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE STYLE AND SOUND

The one variable that a Hollywood director could not control was sound. Exhibitors added the sound live – always including music. Movie palaces had orchestras of 50 members; small theaters would make do with a piano player. The Hollywood studios would send out arrangements for musical accompaniment, and their owned and operated movie houses always added this music. Indeed movie palaces not only employed dozens of musicians, but also a conductor whose task was to take the scores sent by the studio to be played. By 1925, fully half the professional musicians in the USA were employed by owners of movie theaters.

Since major Hollywood companies owned studios and theaters, one unit of the studio created sheet music to fit the film. This meant a spectacle like *Ben-Hur* (1925) would have music sent to picture palaces owned by Loew's, Inc., owner of MGM, the studio that created the film. But this was only for urban theaters. In theaters that were not owned by studios, one could expect a range of music where certain passages were associated with westerns, romances and other genres. The musical quality varied, yet there never was pure silence.

Orchestras also added sound effects. Usually clever drummers and their assistants had an array of noise machines – led by a vast drum set – that could make the shot from a pistol seem real, or the crash of an airplane seem even more surprising. Since these noises were not programmable as with music and its notational system, there would be clues of where the sound effect might fit. If one might hear the same music in theaters owned by the major studios, the noises always varied – depending on the skills developed by the noisemakers. Guides were published, but most often this was improvised. Here was a key example of variation by performance.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

But the movie moguls all desired to have directors link the sounds to the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. The owners of studios had tried different experiments since the innovation of movie presentation. The key difficulty lay in that the sounds could not be synchronized to the movie. Movie moguls and their directors wanted actors and actresses to speak from the screen as if they were live performances. When electronic sound recording and reproduction became possible, a new era of Classical Hollywood Narrative Style commenced – and the coming of sound will be the subject of Chapter 6. Before that in nations across Europe, movie directors like the aforementioned Ernst Lubitsch and F. W. Murnau worked in their own national movie industries which we will look at in Chapters 4 and 5.

CASE STUDY 3

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD FILMMAKING STYLE

Hollywood produced and distributed newsreels during the 1920s. But these non-feature filmmakers also embraced the Classical Hollywood Style. For example, newsreels were filmed on location and then edited into stories. Newsreels had to entertain as well as inform. The typical newsreel was a ten-minute pot-pourri of short stories, released twice a week to theaters.

The model was straightforward enough – create an illustrated magazine on film. Promised (and delivered) were shots of Kings, Queens and US Presidents, and stars of sport. It was during the First World War and the Presidential election held in 1920 that newsreels fully embraced the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style means of telling a story – based on figures in the news who cooperated with newsreel camera operators.



3.13 *Nanook of the North* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922).

In 1922, Robert J. Flaherty took the short story structure of the newsreel and created the feature-length documentary *Nanook of the North*. Flaherty carefully staged and edited the story. The formal title of this feature gives away its narrative: *Nanook of the North: A Story of Life and Love in the Actual Arctic*. As filmmakers were doing in Hollywood, Flaherty scripted, shot and edited *Nanook of the North* as a story feature-length film.

The key difference from Hollywood feature films was that Flaherty shot footage on location – near the Hudson Bay in Arctic Canada. Flaherty carefully staged events as was the norm for newsreel filmmakers of the time. Who cared if Charlie Chaplin never dressed as a “Little Tramp,” or that Nanook was in fact named Allakariallak, while the “wife” shown in the film was not really his wife?

Flaherty skillfully used inter-titles to establish Nanook’s skills as a great hunter, and to construct a framing narrative within which the images are understood as the story of man confronting nature. Flaherty built drama by continuity editing. He told a story in which Nanook was threatened by the Arctic elements and then showed how Nanook solved the problems of basic living in the frozen north.

Nanook of the North was the first shot-on-location feature film of its kind to achieve mass popularity and critical acclaim. The film’s success opened the door to a new era of filmmaking by establishing that “non-fiction” films could be created at low cost and then become highly profitable (in terms of both box-office receipts and prestige) for the studios. While the Hollywood moguls invested millions to make hit movies about the past – like *Ben-Hur* – they found that for less than a tenth of that amount they could finance films like *Nanook of the North*.

This was a pioneering effort at a new Hollywood economics – low-cost niche films with a box-office take far in excess of the low costs, resulting in considerable profits. No filmmaker who wanted to reach a mass audience in the USA could do this without using the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style – even when it was called a documentary.

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CHAPTER 4

INFLUENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO HOLLYWOOD: EUROPEAN CINEMA

Introduction

Swedish Realist cinema

The French Experimentalists

Cubists and film

Dadaists and film

Surrealism and film

French Impressionism

German Expressionism

Forgotten histories

Case study 4: Carl Dreyer – A Danish individualist



4.1 UFA Palast am Zoo, Berlin, c. 1928.

INTRODUCTION

During the 1920s, new film styles emerged in Europe as alternatives to the Classical Hollywood system. Instead of an industry, filmmakers in Europe operated as an artistic movement – where a small number of *cinéastes* discussed and commented on each other's creations. A Realist movement emerged in Sweden between 1917 and 1924 with two leading filmmakers Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller.

In France, Cubist, Dadaist, and Surrealist film experimentalists broke completely with the commercial system of filmmaking and sought to create a film style that was a work of art. French impressionists tried to express the inner state of mind of their characters through manipulation of camerawork and editing. Filmmakers like Abel Gance, Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Marcel L'Herbier, and Jean Epstein also were convinced that cinema was a unique art form – not predestined to tell stories the Hollywood way.

Even in defeated Germany, due to its large domestic market and the financial support of the government, German filmmakers created Expressionist films that became known for uncanny set designs, use of light and dark shadows, and stylized acting. These proved so popular that Hollywood lured away the most talented German filmmakers: Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang, and Friedrich Murnau as we also discussed in Chapter 3.

Before we examine the work of the European filmmakers, especially the French and Germans, we need to clearly formulate the nature of a film movement as an alternative to the Classic Hollywood

*The word **cinéaste** was introduced by Louis Delluc to indicate the difference between commercial and art filmmakers.*

Studio System. Conceptually, a movement consists of a set of filmmakers working in a common style and from common ideas – but not in one corporation. This includes writing and theory as well as films. A movement invariably begins by positioning its work against the dominant player, in this case Hollywood. Such a “revolt” requires some sort of institutional support from the film industry, and/or wealthy sponsors, and/or the government to provide the necessary financing. The analysis of any film movement properly begins with historical analysis of the industrial and social conditions which provided the conditions for its creation.

From this institutional base comes a unified style. Since Hollywood and its Classical Narrative Style so dominated the cinema world, historians have found it most productive to examine the efforts of the European filmmakers in terms of their differences from Hollywood films. Within each of the movements certain key filmmakers emerged. That is not to say that they were the only ones, but their films defined the movement's core, and stood in stark contrast to Hollywood style filmmaking.

SWEDISH REALIST CINEMA

In 1900, Sweden began to develop a thriving film industry. By 1909 Charles Magnusson was leading the Swedish film company AB Svenska Biografteatern to international acclaim. Probably no other nation with such a comparatively small population matched the fame of Swedish cinema during the 1910s and 1920s.

Since the country was so small, one man could make a major difference, and that man was Magnusson. He had entered the industry at 19 after he had seen the first exhibitions of the Lumière films in Malmö (Sweden) in 1896. By 1905 he was considered a top newsreel cameraman. Four years later he took charge of AB Svenska Biografteatern, a film production, exhibition and distribution company that had started out in 1905. It produced fiction films as well as travel films and newsreels. In 1912 Magnusson relocated the company to Stockholm. That same year he hired Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller as actor-directors.

In 1913 a combination of circumstances turned AB Svenska Biografteatern company into the only important player in the Swedish film production market. Pathé had invested in Swedish film production but withdrew after a clash with the Swedish censorship board. All smaller film production companies went bankrupt when multiple-reel films became the new film mode. So AB Svenska Biografteatern secured a monopoly domestically and even began to export to nearby European nations.

In 1915 Magnusson branched into exhibition, opening the luxurious Roda Kvarn, (Red Barn) in Stockholm – built in the art nouveau style. AB Svenska Biografteatern was vertically integrating – taking hold of its nation's production, distribution, and exhibition. By 1920 Sjöström and Stiller had completed more than 50 films between them, often based on the works of noted Swedish novelist Selma Lagerlöf and Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen.

Sjöström and Stiller took advantage of Sweden's neutral position during the First World War. Through this period of opportunity, a brief Golden Age of Swedish cinema took place, which started in 1917 and is regarded as having ended in 1923–1924 when Sjöström and Stiller left for Hollywood. Magnusson would remain the head of production until 1928, but with the coming of sound, the Swedish film industry, like that of nearly all countries in Europe, simply became another colony for Hollywood exhibition. This Swedish Golden Age has appropriately been called Swedish Realism – as filmmakers ventured into the countryside and gave Swedish cinema a look of on-location realism – an alternative style to Hollywood studio-based shooting.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Mauritz Stiller was born in Helsinki, Finland, but in 1904 emigrated to Sweden to escape service in the Russian army. (At the time Finland was under Russian control.) He worked in the theater and then moved to the cinema in 1912. **Victor Sjöström** was a native of Sweden, lived for a time in the USA, and then returned to Sweden. He also earned a reputation as a top actor in the theater. He too moved to the cinema, and during the 1910s he learned his craft in the studio just outside Stockholm. Together they directed more than 50 films between 1912 and 1916, most of which have been lost.

Victor Sjöström cut his teeth with literary adaptations. His film *Give Us This Day* (*Ingebord Holm*, 1913) has survived to attest to this director's early interest in realism and social change. It dealt with poverty and the need for the state to help the poor. *Give Us This Day* is credited with securing aid for lower-income families in Sweden.

By 1917 Stiller and Sjöström were entering their most influential phase. In that year Sjöström took a tiny crew and acting company to the mountains of Lapland to shoot *The Outlaw and His Wife* (*Berg-Ejvind och Hans Hustru*, 1918), a dour story of a man (played by Sjöström himself) who had to steal sheep to feed his starving family. The trials of nature at least brought the outlaw and his wife together, huddled in their mountain hideout as they pondered better days through a series of flashbacks.

The Outlaw and His Wife offered an example of the country's landscape fully integrated within the melodramatic saga, not simply serving as an interesting backdrop as would have been the case with the Classical Hollywood cinema. The impact of the natural environment on humans was intensified by the texture of the cinematography, the use of deep focus lenses, complex lighting, double and triple exposures, and a slow paced rhythmic editing. Long shots enabled the viewer to absorb the varied mise-en-scène as the characters struggled their way through life.

In *The Phantom Chariot* (*Korkarlen*, 1921) Sjöström again employed flashbacks to examine the drunken past of hero David Holm (played by Sjöström), who waited (in a churchyard) for "death's wagon" to bear him away. Julius Jaenzon's skillful cinematography enabled Sjöström to offer the viewer a ghost-like effect as Holm's soul seems to take leave of his body. He made three more films in Sweden, but left for Hollywood when MGM offered him a contract. Charles Magnusson supported the idea because he wanted the sole distribution rights to MGM films in Sweden for AB Svenska Biografteatern. Taking the name Seastrom, Sjöström made nine Hollywood films, but with the coming of sound, he returned to Sweden.

Stiller remained in Sweden through 1924. In *Bonds That Chafe* (*Erotikon*, 1920) Stiller established a pattern for sophisticated comedies. In *Thomas Graal's Best Child* (*Thomas Graal's Basta Barn*, 1918) he created a comedy that was set outdoors. The couple in the film are not married for more than a few minutes (and are just riding away from the wedding) when they begin to argue whether their child will be a boy or girl. The backgrounds glow while they disagree. They end up spending their honeymoon apart. Later Stiller derived humor from both bedroom doors, separated by a hallway, being opened, then closed, then opened – simultaneously. The Swedes did not simply make melancholy films – so associated in the 1950s with Ingmar Bergman – but great comedies as well.

The Saga of Gosta Berling (*Gösta Berlings saga*, 1924), based on Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf's novel, would turn out to be Stiller's most successful film. *The Saga of Gosta Berling* in its original form ran for nearly four hours and was shown in two parts. Its plot centers on the search for redemption by Gosta Berling, an excommunicated priest, and the several women who disastrously fall in love with him. It represents a high point as well as the end of the Golden Age of the Swedish silent cinema.



4.2 Greta Garbo in her first leading role in *The Saga of Gosta Berling* or *Gösta Berlings saga*. She decides to leave her lover, and the long lane accentuates her loneliness (3). (Mauritz Stiller, 1924).

With epic sweep and overflowing narrative, *The Saga of Gosta Berling* evokes nineteenth-century Swedish life in a lyrical, vibrant way. The film stands out for its fine use of natural landscape which had been characteristic of the films of Stiller and Sjöström. *The Saga of Gosta Berling* is set in Varmland, on the Norwegian border, an area dominated by lakes. Not only in the famous pursuit by the wolves in the climax, but throughout the film, Stiller made use of the forests, the ever-present frozen water, and the vast landscapes of his native land to advance his complex narrative.

Indeed, Stiller worked on an acting style which fit into, but did not overwhelm, the landscape. Upon this vast fresco of life, Greta Garbo played her second movie role. Contrary to popular belief, Stiller did not discover Garbo. He simply needed two young actresses and sent a request to Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Academy Theater for two actresses. Stiller employed both and shortened the latter's last name from Gustafsson to Garbo. Stiller's Garbo was a fresh young Swedish girl, not the "sleeky dame" (to quote *Variety*) of later MGM fame. MGM wanted Garbo and Stiller came along. He lasted only four years in Hollywood and returned to Sweden in 1928 and died in the same year. Greta Garbo remained an international presence, whose accented voice speaking English made her a major star of early Hollywood talkies.

THE FRENCH EXPERIMENTALISTS

If the Swedes adhered to a tradition of realism, others became a part of the art movement of the avant-garde – principally in France. These artists sought to use cinema to completely break with the past (realism) and begin anew. The Cubists, Dadaists, and Surrealists each had their own principles, all founded by artists who, after working in painting or theater, would then venture into filmmaking. They never sought to be commercial filmmakers but to gain praise for their creativity with fellow intellectuals. All worried that Hollywood was taking over French culture. So they set out consciously to make non-Hollywood films.

The years prior to the First World War were characterized by intense activity in the modern arts. By 1913 several modern artists had begun to consider film seriously for its kinetic dynamism. For example, the painter **Pablo Picasso**, an avid movie-goer, toyed with the idea of using film for the representation of movement.

To survive economically, they made very short films (generally five to 20 minutes in length at most), and they rarely used established actors or experienced technicians. Instead they relied on friends. They needed little in the way of financing, using their own money or what could be borrowed or scraped together from rich patrons of the arts. They did not distribute to established theaters but staged special avant-garde "events."

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was one of the most productive painters and sculptors of the twentieth century. He was co-founder of the Cubist movement. One of his most famous paintings is Guernica (1937), a protest against the German bombardment of the old Basque town Guernica during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

CUBISTS AND FILM

The beginning of the **Cubist** movement in modern art is usually tied to the exhibition of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1907. The Cubists were concerned with *form*; they questioned the value of traditional pictorial and narrative procedures and values. The 1920s saw the Cubist film movement emerge as artists-turned-filmmakers pushed the concept of pure form toward non-representational mise-en-scène and non-narrative structure.

Hans Richter, after finishing at the Weimar Academy of Art in 1912, began to write about modernism in art for *Aktion* journal. After serving in the First World War and being wounded, he journeyed to Switzerland to become a painter. Stymied by the limits of canvas and brush, he sought out a three-dimensional forum with an added time dimension – motion pictures. He is most famous for his first work *Rhythm 21* (*Rhythmus 21*, 1921–1924), an animated work exploring fundamental shapes. He thought that film should be a kinetic composition of rectangular forms of grays, blacks, and whites. The frame was not a window through which to view a story, but rather a canvas on which to adjust the shapes and designs.

Viking Eggeling also began as a painter. During the early 1920s he became interested in line as a formal element and tried to reduce art to its basic components in the way music can be described as notes and tones. Eggeling studied animation so he could literally turn a painting into a film. In *Diagonal Symphony* (*Symphonie diagonale*, 1921–1923), a “moving drawing,” one motif follows another with the diagrammatic clarity of a blackboard drawing all arranged along a diagonal axis. Simple patterns lead to more complex ones and back again.

Walter Ruttmann, a trained architect, was also interested in shape, design, and space, and so turned to cinema because he did not want to be constrained by a single static image. His desire to set a Cubist painting in motion resulted in a series of abstract films he made in Germany in the early 1920s. In his workshop outside Munich (while Richter and Eggeling were working outside Berlin), he made *Opus I* (1921), an animated film filled with triangles, circles, squares and ellipses; bubbles, globes, and clouds; and rhythmically flickering light and darkness – music made visible. Ruttmann also crafted *Opus II*, *Opus III*, and *Opus IV*, all variations on the same theme.

Fernand Léger, the French Cubist painter, discovered cinema by watching Charlie Chaplin comedies. In collaboration with Dudley Murphy, a young American journalist, he made *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1924), an abstract film reminiscent of a Cubist painting. He would go on to prepare other films (including an episode in Hans Richter's *Dreams That Money Can Buy*, 1947) but *Le Ballet Mécanique* remains one of the most influential and widely seen of the experimental works of the 1920s.

In *Le Ballet Mécanique*, Murphy and Léger explored the impact of the age of machines on the world at large. Instead of a human ballet, we see the rhythms and movements of objects made to move mechanically. Actually, relatively few of the multitudes of objects in the film are actual machines, but through careful manipulation, hats, bottles, canes, and faces become almost mechanical. The structure of the film is musical: Objects are introduced, manipulated, and juxtaposed in a careful rhythm through time. Through



4.3 Charlie Chaplin as imagined in *Le Ballet Mécanique* (Fernand Léger, 1924).

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was an Austrian psychiatrist and the founder of psychoanalysis, a therapy that examines the unconscious mind. Freud's ideas that human behavior is also determined by desires and fears we are unaware of have been very influential.

graphic matches and repetitions, we see that the film itself has a mechanical structure, but has no story. It is a Cubist visual design, a stark contrast to the Classical Hollywood story-telling.

DADAISTS AND FILM

Dada as an art movement originated in Switzerland but spread quickly after the First World War to Germany, France, and even the United States. It was a reaction to the war, a revolt against agony, death, greed, and materialism. So, for example, a Dada performance artist might fire a pistol above the audience's heads, then deliver a lecture, and finally simply undress. **Marcel Duchamp**, under the pseudonym R. Mutt, entered a urinal, which he called *Fountain*, into an art exhibition. Dadaists sought to shock, bewilder, and mock.

An early important Dada film came with René Clair's *Entr'Acte* (*Between Acts*, 1924) which took illogic to an extreme. *Entr'acte*, a comic fantasy, was an integral part of **Francis Picabia**'s ballet *Relache*, which premiered in December. The film opened the performance as a sort of prologue that featured Picabia and the ballet's composer, **Erik Satie**, descending from the sky in slow motion to load a cannon aimed at the audience. Most of *Entr'Acte* was shown at the ballet's intermission, to a rising chorus of boos and howls of disgust.

Entr'Acte is a loose series of shots, defying logical narrative connections, unified only through visual links. For example, a ballerina, photographed in slow motion from below, is transformed into an opening and closing flower, an image which matches the inflation and deflation of balloons with faces drawn on them shown later. This technique exemplifies some of the Dadaist spirit of anarchy and mockery toward any serious interpretation of the world. The film ends in a chase, seemingly inspired by a Mack Sennett Keystone Kops comedy, which includes a camel-drawn hearse. In its day, *Entr'Acte* was seen as an assault on French society; today, the film is considered as a most important example of Dadaist filmmaking.

SURREALISM AND FILM

Surrealism, built on the ruins of Dada, had a goal of positive action. Dada, in negating everything, ended by eliminating itself. The Surrealists continued Dada's attack on traditional art but as an organized movement. They sought an absolute reality or sur-reality by mixing dream and reality. This proved difficult as the French Surrealist writer André Breton admitted, but the fun of trying it was worth the pursuit. In 1924 André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* (*Le Manifeste du Surréalisme*) and the first issue of the Surrealist review, *La Revolution Surréaliste*, appeared. The Surrealist filmmakers worked mostly in and around Paris, but outside the regular commercial film industry in France. They received grants from rich patrons and screened their work to a select few.

In his *Surrealist Manifesto* Breton stated that logical thinking was not enough to solve the problems of modern times (he was speaking during the late 1920s). Since logical thinking was accepted as the basis of our behavior, our unconsciousness had been suppressed. He believed this had been destructive for mankind. Breton's writings echoed the then new and revolutionary ideas of the psychoanalyst **Freud** on the unconscious.

Surrealists sought a nonconformist way of life and glorified the free mind of youth. They believed in free association and free love. They mocked bourgeois people who, as the Surrealists believed, were trapped by rules of behavior and had lost contact with their own unconscious. To create "sur-reality" objects should be taken from their normal environment and placed in a new setting. One of the Surrealist experiments

Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) was a French painter and one of the most important Dadaists. He became famous for the so-called "ready made," an existing object that became art because an artist signed it and declared it art.

Francis Picabia (1879–1953) was a French painter, graphic artist and author. He was involved in the modern art scene in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century and worked as a Cubist, Dadaist, and Surrealist but also made realistic figurative works.

Erik Satie (1866–1925) was a French composer and pianist. He is regarded by musicologists as a forerunner of minimal music (minimalism emphasizes extreme simplicity of the form).

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

suggested by the famous painter Salvador Dali was to bake a 15-yard loaf, leave it early in the morning in a public square and examine how people would react to it.

As filmmakers, this meant deliberately avoiding the Classical Hollywood style. Surrealist movies were not structured according to strict cause–effect rules, which they identified with the rational thought of the “normal” world. Instead, the Surrealist filmmakers sought to make films with *no* causal connections as best exemplified in the most famous Surrealist film – Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel’s *An Andalusian Dog* (*Un Chien Andalou*, 1928).

According to Dali and Buñuel the script of this film was based on their dreams which they wrote down each morning. The temporal and spatial structure of the film is confusing and no immediate logic occurs to the viewer. The time frame is indicated with inter-titles – once upon a time; eight years later; three o’clock in the morning; 16 years before; in the spring – which seem to point randomly to moments in time. Characters have no names and the film gives no clues to how they relate to each other. They pop up in different places that do not seem to have any logical connection. Scenes in which the eye of a woman is slit with a knife (it was an eye of a dead cow) were gauged to stun audiences. Dali and Buñuel recommended that audiences take on a passive attitude and just let the film flow over them, so that the images could seep into their unconsciousness.



4.4 *An Andalusian Dog* or *Un chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel / Salvador Dali, 1928). Note the alternation of the high and low angle camera position, the narrowed frame and the use of light and shadow.

An Andalusian Dog ran for nine months in Paris through late 1929 into 1930, in part because it was so attacked by the right-wing press of the day. But Paris was the exception. In the Netherlands the film only got three screenings at the Film Liga, a club of film lovers interested in film as art. In the USA film societies presented it to small audiences interested in Salvador Dali paintings.

FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM

Between 1918 and 1928 an influential movement emerged and flourished in France which many have come to call French Impressionism. In Paris there were clubs established to program these new works and writers who attempted to explain the new cinema and its place in culture. The French Impressionists, through production and exhibition, and through their writings, were able to convince the artists and intellectuals of Paris of the 1920s to take film seriously. They argued that film need not simply be Hollywood stars and stories, but, could be, as Louis Delluc maintained, a unique and vital art form on its own and still appeal to mass audiences.

The French Impressionists stressed that filmmakers could transform nature, through careful manipulation of camerawork, to express the mental and emotional states of characters. They did not reject story-telling per se, only the narrow way Hollywood chose to tell its tales. The style of the French Impressionists was

characterized by the expanded vision of camerawork they used to express such mental states. Filmmakers Abel Gance, Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Marcel L'Herbier, and Jean Epstein, among others, emphasized subjective camerawork, and optical devices as well as rhythmic editing to convey in a new way the emotional development of their characters.

The particular economic and social fabric of France of the 1920s defined the nature of this alternative film tradition. As it did throughout Europe, the coming of the First World War in 1914 meant the French film industry effectively closed down. Workers left to fight; factories turned to war production. Movie theaters turned increasingly to the Hollywood films of Douglas Fairbanks and Cecil B. DeMille, the serials of Pearl White, the westerns of William S. Hart, and the comedies of Charlie Chaplin. The movies proved as popular in France as they were in the United States at the time. By 1918, when the war ended, Hollywood had taken complete hold of the French market.

Young French *cinéastes* wanted to try to move beyond Hollywood to transform film into a mainstream art form. They sought to craft their own scripts and work as independently as possible, but they distributed their films through the traditional commercial channels to mainstream theaters, in part because they wished to offer mass audiences an alternative to Hollywood. They did not rebel against the cinema as business, but instead wished to create an alternative – an “art cinema” business.

As in the United States, the status of film in France had changed dramatically from the years before the First World War. In 1912 French newspapers did not regularly list film showings. By 1925 not only were films well publicized, there were a half dozen magazines devoted solely to the cinema. The First World War may have disrupted the production of films, but it only encouraged interest in them as mass entertainment.



4.5 *Le Film*, V/104 March 1918.

Intellectuals who did not want to embrace Cubism, Dadaism or Surrealism became the founders and proponents of the French Impressionist movement. They began publishing journals to express their love for the new art and to examine its complexity. In 1917, Louis Delluc became editor of *Le Film*, and wrote impassioned pleas on behalf of the movies that added **superimpositions**, purposely kept images out of focus and employed fast cutting.

The new Parisian film enthusiasts stressed that film ought to stand on its own as an art form of suggestion and feeling. They placed the character's psychological state at the center of a film. Viewers should focus on the impression of feelings and emotions, not the drama of a story. For example, to depict memories, they

A superimposition means that the different images of two frames are overlaid (superimposed) in one image and one frame.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

used flashbacks. To penetrate consciousness they used dream sequences. Germaine Dulac's *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (*La souriante Madame Beudet*, 1923), for example, offered a study of the fantasy life of its female central character, escaping from a dull marriage through daydream and memory.

The Impressionists also experimented with cinematography and editing to better convey mental states. In Impressionist films, **masking the frame** and superimpositions traced and delineated the thoughts and feeling of central characters. In Jean Epstein's *The Faithful Heart* (*Coeur Fidèle*, 1923), the heroine looks out of a window, and the superimposition of the foul air from the nearby waterfront harbor conveys her feelings of dejection in being a simple barmaid. In the Impressionist film, objects are seen from the point of view of a specific character; they may even be out of focus if the character is drunk or sick.

French Impressionist filmmakers also made use of rhythmic editing to tell their stories in as exciting a fashion as Hollywood, but also to capture a character's feeling and emotion. In Abel Gance's *The Wheel* (*La Roue*, 1922), an impending train wreck is presented in an ever-accelerating pace; shot lengths get shorter and shorter to make us "feel" the crash. The Impressionists believed that just as music uses the length and tone of its notes, film should use **spatial**, **graphic**, **rhythmic** and **temporal editing**.

Masking the frame means that the lens of the camera is partly covered by a piece of opaque material to obscure parts of the image it records.

Editing I

Spatial editing constructs the film space through editing in such a way that the viewer understands where the action is taking place – for example, by first giving an overview of the space and then showing parts of it.

Graphic editing creates a graphic relation between shots.

Rhythmic editing defines the length of the different succeeding shots and of the movie as a whole. To build up a climax, for example, the length of the shots is cut shorter and shorter.

Temporal editing defines the temporal relations between the events in the story. A flashback or a flashforward are examples of temporal editing.

The Impressionists wrote of a new film aesthetic. They argued that all art functions as a transformation of nature by the imagination, which they defined as an expression of feelings. To them cinema seemed to be capable of expressing a new and exciting view of the world, distinct from the view projected by the Classical Hollywood cinema. To express this aesthetic, they coined the term *photogénie*, the ability to transform reality through the cinema. This concept was based on the special power of the camera to blur images, superimpose images, slow down motion, in short to give "reality" a new look. In narrative films they believed the tale ought to be told from the point of view of one character; close-ups and a variety of camera angles should be used to isolate objects, and gestures, adding to a new-found sense of subjectivity.

Impressionists also made great use of optical devices, including masks around the frame, dissolves, superimpositions, out-of-focus shots, **irises**, **wipes**, and **fades – in and out**. These devices – coupled with fast and slow motion – heightened the denotation of subjectivity, emphasizing dramatic moments. By stylizing images, these cinematic alternatives brought out all the possibilities of the pictorial qualities of the cinema. This style enriched the narrative film form by revealing characters' inner states; reveries, fantasies, and

An iris is a type of mask to cover the lens of the camera with a round in the middle that can widen and narrow like an iris.

memories were expressed through dissolves, superimpositions, fade-ins and fade-outs, selective focus, and slow motion.

Editing II

A **wipe** is the visible transition from one shot to the other whereby the first shot is slowly wiped away and replaced by the second shot.

Fade-in means that the image slowly changes from blackness to the actual image.

Fade-out means that the image slowly disappears to blackness.

These stylistic manipulations first began to appear in films at the end of the First World War. Pioneer French Impressionist Abel Gance in his *J'Accuse!* (*I Accuse*, 1919), for example, uses superimposed images to underscore a character's fears and imaginings. Memories and fantasies interrupt his story, and vivid point-of-view shots (for example down the barrel of a gun) project that character's particular viewpoint. Gance also drew symbolic parallels in *J'Accuse!*. He likened a war parade to a macabre dance and an actual battle to a painting. *J'Accuse!* announced to the world the new style of filmmaking that was developing in France.

Similar stylistic uses of camerawork and editing can be found in Marcel L'Herbier's *The Carnival of Truth* (*Le Carnaval des Vérités* (1920), *Man of the Sea* (*L'Homme du Large*, 1920), *El Dorado* (1921) and *Don Juan and Faust* (1922), Louis Delluc's *Fever* (*Fièvre*, 1921), and *The Woman from Nowhere* (*La Femme de Nulle Part*, 1922) and in Germaine Dulac's *The Spanish Feast* (*La fête espagnole*, 1920) and *The Smiling Madame Beudet*.

This impetus to experiment with new uses of camerawork and editing began to undergo significant changes as early as 1923. While continuing the interest in experimenting with camerawork, new works stressed even more rhythmic montage to indicate the flow of a character's experience, frequently in means of accelerated cutting. Jean Epstein's *The Red Inn* (*L'Auberge Rouge*) and *The Faithful Heart* (both 1923), Marcel L'Herbier's *The Inhuman Woman* (*L'Inhumaine*, 1923), Germaine Dulac's *The Devil in the City* (*Le Diable dans la Ville*, 1925), and Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927) offer fascinating examples. All were inspired by Gance's *The Wheel* (*La Roue*, 1923), with its innovative use of rhythmic editing, climaxing with shots only one frame long – lasting only 1/24th of a second.

The peak of the movement seems to have come in the years immediately preceding the coming of sound and the Great Depression in Europe and the USA. During this period, experiments with camerawork were pushed to the limit. For example, Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927) employed any number of hand-held camera shots and structures a climax with the employment of three screens or a triptych. Marcel L'Herbier began to experiment with length tracking and crane shots, culminating in his *Money* (*L'Argent*, 1928), where the camera prowls through corridors and floats along ceilings. Jean Epstein began to try purely visual, titleless sequences. His *Six and a Half Eleven* (*Six et Demi, Onze*, 1927), for example, had only seven titles in the first half-hour. But all of these experiments remained just that, never capturing the attention of other filmmakers in the way that earlier ruminations of camerawork and rhythmic editing had.

The French Impressionists were never able to survive economically. Eventually, the companies headed by Gance, L'Herbier, and Epstein went out of business. With the coming of sound and a world-wide depression, experiments in the cinema were not financially as possible as earlier in the French film industry. The

French Impressionist filmmakers continued to work, but unlike Hollywood movies, they were unable to even dominate the screens in France. Mass audiences in France flocked to movies from Hollywood; a small number of film-as-art enthusiasts embraced Surrealist and other experimental forms.

Major French Impressionist directors

Louis Delluc, in the years immediately following the end of the First World War, proved one of the more significant figures in the revival of French cinema, making contributions as a writer, a theorist, and a filmmaker. The film which opened his eyes to the possibilities of the cinema was Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915). Through this work from Hollywood, Delluc could envision vast potential for the cinema as the twentieth century's art form. As a critic and writer, he tried to make sense of the movies of Hollywood's D. W. Griffith, Thomas Ince, and Charlie Chaplin. Delluc coined a new critical vocabulary – such as *cinéastes* – and attempted to better understand the nature of the cinema and its proper relationship to the other arts. He championed the French Impressionist filmmakers; he saw the cinema as a popular, not an elite, art form.

Eventually Delluc turned to filmmaking. Between 1919 and his premature death in 1924, he scripted one film, *The Spanish Feast* (directed by Germaine Dulac), and directed eight others. His *Fever* drew heavily on the French theater, but also the westerns of William S. Hart. While its setting was hardly the Old West (instead a run down bistro in Marseilles), old passions are rekindled, feuds ignited, and men are killed. With its realistic *mise-en-scène*, *Fever* impressed the critics of the day with its exploration of the powerful versus the powerless. Predating the dark films of the French cinema made just before World War II, Delluc struck a chord with his portrait of a derailed society searching for meaning after the First World War.

The Flood (*L'Inondation* 1924), Delluc's final film, was set in the French provinces. Probably inspired by another of his favorites, Swedish filmmaker Victor Sjöström's *Karin, Daughter of Ingmar* (*Karin Ingmarsdotter*, 1920), *The Flood* includes murder and an evocative *mise-en-scène*. Shot on location in the Rhône valley, Delluc wasted (as Hollywood saw it) a portion of his narrative by describing the village of Vaucluse, its festivals and complex culture. Here again was an evocative work, foreshadowing the lyricism so common to the French cinema of the 1930s.

Abel Gance was another innovator who tried to utilize all combinations of the new film technologies to better convey the world of his characters. In his epic *Napoleon* (1927), Gance alternated long lenses to capture more distance and shorter ones to capture depth. He pioneered early wide-screen with three images lined up side by side (Polyvision). He strapped cameras to cars and people to capture their point of view. In *Napoleon* he even placed his camera operator on roller skates to move around among the characters.

Gance came to the cinema as an actor. By 1911 he had organized his own production company, Le Film Français. After the First World War he went on to make several of the most famous films: *J'Accuse!*, *The Wheel*, and the magnificent *Napoleon*. He reached his peak with *J'Accuse!*, a provocative film about the recent world war and a huge financial success, but the massive financial failure precipitated by *Napoleon* thrust him to the periphery of the film industry. Gance strove to capture his characters feeling the pain of war. We look down the barrel of a gun and then see the same instrument used to kill innocent birds. Directly inspired by D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, Gance sustains an often shocking rhythmic montage in the final battle sequence. As a soldier reads letters he will never send, the fighting progresses with cannon fire, troops massing for attack, and night battles punctuated by blinding flashes of gunfire. This impressive

montage, as well as quieter ones such as the festival scene, demonstrated that rhythmic editing stood at the core of the French Impressionist movement.

His early success inspired Gance to plunge into a project of vast proportions: *Napoleon* (1927). This narrative sprawls over the life of the French military leader, from his career as a young cadet through his triumphal march into Italy. Gance twisted history to present an extremely positive image of his subject. He skillfully employed a vast array of cinematic parameters: rapid cutting, tinting, superimpositions, wide-angle lenses, hand-held cameras, and a new triple-screen, wide-screen image process called Polyvision. This film is a masterwork of visual experimentation. Gance commenced planning in 1924, began shooting in 1925, and wrapped a year and half later. The six-hour film opened on 7 April 1927, but was a box-office failure and so was one of the last French Impressionist films made.



4.6 *The Wheel* or *La Roue* (Abel Gance, 1923).

Marcel L'Herbier is often considered the most representative of the French Impressionist directors. While Louis Delluc focused on the screenplay and Gance on the skillful use of the available technology, L'Herbier stressed camerawork to create an alternative style. In *El Dorado* (1921), for example, a story of Hedwick (a young Swedish painter) and Sibilla (a night club dancer and model), L'Herbier systematically blurred his images to give the spectator the feeling that he is looking from the perspective of the main character. He sought to make "visual music." Because of its maskings, superimpositions, and process shots, the film projects the experimental feel of discontinuous narrative. It was as if L'Herbier realized the reigning power of the narrative early on and wanted to remove it.

L'Herbier worked at Gaumont, one of the largest studios in France, and made routine mainstream films but he could experiment as well. His *Man of the Sea* proved interesting for its experiments with low key lighting, foreground and background contrasts, and unusual wipes and masking. One additional remarkable feature was that inter-titles were superimposed over images rather than placed on separate cards between shots.



4.7 *L'Inhumaine* (Marcel L'Herbier, 1923).

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

By the mid-1920s L'Herbier felt he was ready to venture out on his own. He left Gaumont and made his two most famous works: *The Inhuman Woman* and *Money*. In *The Inhuman Woman*, a serial adventure romance, the story served as a pretext for experimental influenced narrative film to compete with Hollywood. The tale of a celebrated singer is constantly ruptured, suspended and “broken” to call attention to the process of filmmaking itself. Not only does the film include all the experiments of camerawork, but it incorporates an editing style reminiscent of Abel Gance. *Money*, inspired by Emile Zola's novel of the same name, was more radical in its theme – it is an attack on capitalism – than in its style. Its attack on capitalism did not sit well with middle-class audiences and so along with Gance's *Napoleon*, it marked the end of the French Impressionist film movement.

Germaine Dulac began her career as a writer for the feminist French journal *La Française* in 1909, and then moved into the early film industry as a camerawoman. By 1918 she had formed her own company. After work in cine-clubs and a visit to the United States in the early 1920s (including a meeting with D. W. Griffith), she made *The Smiling Madame Beudet* which established her reputation.

Dulac directed her first film in 1915. Her early films were conventional stories, aimed at the general French audience. Gradually she experimented more and more; she was certainly outside the mainstream with *The Smiling Madame Beudet* and a key representative of the French Impressionist movement. This film depicts the life of a small-town woman who was trapped in a marriage to a coarse, repulsive businessman and spent her time fantasizing about a new life. In characteristic Impressionist style, Dulac used slow-motion cinematography to get inside the head of the woman and to express her mental state. For example, in one scene, Beudet's point of view is conveyed through a careful use of dissolves, and a distorted use of lenses, double exposures, and slow motion. As she is reading a magazine, she comes upon a photo of a champion tennis player. Suddenly, in a slow-motion superimposition, the tennis player breaks out of his stance to serve the ball and becomes, through superimposition again, her husband.

By 1927 Dulac found it harder and harder to work in mainstream, male-dominated French cinema. So she abandoned the French Impressionist style and together with **Antonin Artaud** she created a Surrealist-like film, *The Seashell and the Clergyman* which, in its dream structure, lacked the typical Impressionist concern with narrative. She broke with spatial and temporal continuity. She added no inter-titles to guide the viewer or fades with which to punctuate sequences. She seemed to be questioning the very techniques of subjectivity which she had used so effectively earlier in the decade. *The Seashell and the Clergyman* seems to be a film about the French Impressionist style of filmmaking.

During the following two years Dulac's work intersected with that of another avant-garde movement – Cubist cinema. Her *Disque 927* (1928), *Themes and Variations* (*Thèmes et variations*, 1928), and *Arabesque* (*Étude Cinégraphique sur une Arabesque*, 1929) all seem more related to Fernand Léger than Abel Gance. Ironically, she eventually turned to directing newsreels for the Gaumont company.



4.8 *The Seashell and the Clergyman* or *La coquille et le clergyman* (Germaine Dulac, 1927).

Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) was a French poet, playwright, actor, and theater director. He believed that theater could free humanity from negative and destructive unconscious feelings. To achieve maximum involvement of audiences he created many innovations in theater staging like overhead catwalks and theater performances in factories or airplane hangars.

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

During the 1920s the only other European national film industry that could compete with Hollywood was found in Germany. Even before the rise of Adolf Hitler, the federal government supported a German film industry to provide films that could woo audiences away from Hollywood. German films were popular amongst German audiences and the German film industry flourished until 1926 when its most noted filmmakers (Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang and F. W. Murnau) left for Hollywood.

Amidst the turbulent period after the First World War when Germany changed from an empire into a republic and a severe economic crisis hit the country, German Expressionism, a term borrowed from painting and theater that refers to an extreme stylization of the mise-en-scène, found its way to the cinema. Its films offered (inter)national audiences something so different that it soon became iconic for German film in the 1920s. Indeed, the central government subsidized the largest film production and distribution company Germany would ever know: the Universum Film AG (Universe Film Inc. hereafter UFA).

In December 1917, as war still raged, the government established UFA. From the beginning, UFA took an aggressive industrial strategy and started acquiring other companies by simply taking them over or by buying the majority of their stock. Three large film companies together formed the first basis for the UFA: the studio of Oskar Messter, the studios, rental offices and theaters of Paul Davidson, and the German film rental and production offices and theaters of the Danish Nordisk company. Thus, UFA formed a vertically integrated company from the beginning and became the major player in the German movie business.

In June 1921, UFA took over Decla-Bioscop and acquired the services of filmmakers Fritz Lang and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. In 1923 UFA appointed Erich Pommer head of production which had a significant impact on UFA since he believed that the only way Germany could compete with Hollywood was by producing quality films with a slightly alternative style. Pommer had already done this by producing Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, 1920). *Caligari* became emblematic of the German Expressionist style with stylized sets and non-Hollywood-like acting. But while we celebrate German Expressionism, UFA was also producing and distributing conventional (read: Hollywood-like) detective films, historical epics and comedies. Expressionist films caught so much attention because they looked very different from most of the other Weimar films that offered realism in the depiction of the story and the characters. Expressionist films strove for a non-realist look to compete with Hollywood's continued popularity at the same time that the central German government posted restrictions on how many movies Hollywood could export to Germany.



4.9 Poster of *Metropolis*, designed by Werner Graul, c. 1926.

But UFA could not out-do Hollywood. Fritz Lang's famous science fiction film – and according to some scholars an Expressionist film – *Metropolis* (1926) is a case in point. Lang had employed some 800 actors and actresses, 30,000 extras, and taken nearly a year to film. UFA managers hoped it would become a hit in the United States, but the film ended up losing so much money that UFA was reorganized under new management.

In order to protect themselves, the German companies began to make a series of agreements with Hollywood. In 1927, UFA formed a joint venture with Paramount and MGM. Under this arrangement, UFA's most important theaters would exhibit 20 of Paramount's and 20 of MGM's films in Germany and, in exchange, the American companies would handle ten UFA pictures in the United States. A smaller company, Rex Film, coordinated distribution with United Artists, the struggling major US movie producer. These agreements did not survive the coming of sound.

Romanticism was a cultural movement at the end of the eighteenth century that started as a reaction to rationalism and the Enlightenment. The recurring themes in Romanticism are (unfulfilled) desire, loneliness, melancholy, and the opposition between natural and unnatural.

Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) was a Dutch painter. He was one of the greatest painters of the nineteenth century, but was only recognized after his death. He broke with the tradition of painting objects in a naturalistic way and instead emphasized the symbolic expression of the art work.

Expressionistic stylistic traits

German Expressionism was a relatively small movement – some scholars even claim that only six films could be called “true” Expressionist films – that got positive international recognition. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was the first Expressionist film launched in 1920 and four years later in 1924 *Waxworks* (*Das Wachsfiguren Kabinett*) by Paul Leni the last. This does not mean that Expressionism just vanished after 1924; on the contrary, a lot of German films showed very clear traits of Expressionism, especially in the settings.

Expressionism refers to an extreme stylization of the *mise-en-scène*: chiaroscuro lighting (the pattern of light and dark in an image produced by the distribution of shadows within it), surrealist settings, stylized acting, and frequently a camera moving about this “unreal” world. The gothic appearance of these films is often accompanied by macabre, low-life subject matter. The influence of the earlier period called **Romanticism** is recognizable in the appearances of doubles, vampires and artificial creatures. Mirror effects, double exposure and trick photography – by then well-known film techniques – were again “invented” by Expressionist filmmakers and used to create an uncanny look. The overall effect is of a cinematic world filled with angst, paranoia, and non-rational phenomena.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and its stylized sets has long been celebrated for its three set designers – Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann, and Walter Rohrig – who took their cues from German Expressionism, an avant-garde movement which had been going strong for more than a decade in German painting, theater, literature and architecture. When *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* appeared, it was considered unlike any film that had been made to that time. But to those familiar with Expressionism in other arts, this film provided no shock. It was a surprise only to the mass audiences generally unfamiliar with the German avant-garde. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is no tentative essay in the Expressionist style, but rather a full-fledged work. Why? Where did the Expressionism in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* come from?

Only after Expressionism had been established in painting, literature and drama did the film industry embrace it. This style had its origins in a revolt against the arts of the nineteenth century. Painters such as **Vincent van Gogh** and **Paul Gauguin** rejected the aesthetic of absolute fidelity to the external appearance of the world and began to express their personal, subjective visions. In Norway, painter **Edvard Munch** began to paint severely distorted figures and completely abandoned nineteenth century realistic detail. Proponents of Expressionism criticized not only nineteenth-century art and its obsession with realism, but also the Weimar Republic. Through a vague idealism, they sought a somehow better world.

Expressionism began to appear in literature and drama during the 1910s. Expressionist literature, like Expressionist art, was a reaction against the naturalism which had come to dominate German writing of the 1890s. Expressionist playwrights in particular wanted to create dramas emphasizing the spiritual aspects of humanity. They penned extremely stylized plays of deep subjectivity and self-expression. Actors became symbols who interacted with the decor, costumes, and lighting and used unrestrained gestures, with broad, exaggerated facial expressions. The sets were non-realistic, and were often overtly symbolic.

The First World War offered a key turning point. If anything, the horrors of war exacerbated the dissolution and despair that had been the impetus behind the Expressionist movement. At the end of the war, the Expressionistic movement ceased to be simply an avant-garde style of the few; it became an important movement in the arts of a defeated nation. Government museums began to purchase the Expressionist paintings they had ignored a few years earlier; the most prominent theatrical companies began to stage Expressionist plays. Indeed, in the years immediately after the war, there was a great unity among the artists of Germany. There seemed, even on the political level, hope for a better world through the new democratic Weimar government, created in 1919.



4.10 Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1893. Pictured at the Munch Museum, Oslo in 2008.

Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was a Norwegian painter and sculptor. In his early career he was fascinated by emotions of fear and uncertainty, death and love, and expressed these emotions often in his art.

*Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) was a French painter. To find inspiration from unspoiled nature he went to Tahiti in 1891. His Tahitian paintings became famous for their simple forms, lithe and firm lines. One of his most famous paintings is *Women of Tahiti* (1891).*



4.11 Shots from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* or *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Fritz Lang, 1919). Dr. Caligari – note the details: the three stripes in his hair are repeated on his glove (1). (2) shows a painted landscape with angular lines. Note the deformed shadow of Dr. Caligari. Painted set dressed with curtains and rounded lines (3).

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari initiated a trend in German filmmakers. They looked for new ways to project subjectivity on the screen; instead of simply having actors or actresses show anger, filmmakers attempted to use other cinematic means to convey rage. So, for example, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, by presenting the world seen entirely through the eyes of a medium, could offer a distorted world from the point of view of a mad man. In this film all the elements of cinema were made to play an active role in conveying the meaning of emotions or feelings. So when we see the insane Francis for the first time in the insane asylum courtyard as he stops to look around, we are given a visual representation of his madness through the distorted set design. The lines radiating out from him indicate that this world is a vision of his own making.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) was an Austrian actor and theater and film director. He was one of the first modern theater directors and believed – unlike many of his contemporaries – that each play required a different style of directing and that a director should control every element of a production.

Louis XV (1710–1774) was king of France from 1715 until 1774.

The French Revolution changed French society from a class society into a civil republic. In 1789 the French National Assemblée adopted the “Declarations of the Man and of the Citizen” stating that all men are born and remain free and that all men had equal rights.

We see, as we do throughout the film, vertical lines and horizontal planes disturbing the “normal” sense of space. Actors wear costumes which clash – as do their gestures – with disjointed sets. Make-up also conveys the inner feelings of the characters. When Francis is not in the insane asylum, he wears ordinary, Hollywood-approved silent film make-up. In the insane asylum sequences he has heavy make-up around his eyes and mouth to indicate that he is under the spell of the mad doctor. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* seems to be a painting in motion, far from a Classical Hollywood film in which characters operate in a space of visual continuity. Expressionism projected a world of visual discontinuity. But the most popular German filmmakers only used touches of expressionism.

Noted German directors

Ernst Lubitsch is probably best known for his comedies made in Hollywood, but from 1911 to 1922 he was a major force in German filmmaking. In 1911 Lubitsch began his career as an actor in the **Max Reinhardt** German Expressionist theater company. A year later he began to make one-reel shorts, first as a writer, then as a writer-director. *The Oyster Princess* (*Die Austernprinzessin*, 1919) proved his first comedy with his famous wit. The narrative lampooned the American nouveaux riches who, for all their wealth, were still portrayed as uncouth and uncultured. This comedy of manners is a farce about Americans trying to become members of European royalty. In this film he depicts a world in which everyone consumes to excess. In the sheer pomposity of the wedding ceremony we see hundreds of waiters (one per guest) played off against the small details of comedy for which Lubitsch became famous. The famous Lubitsch trademark (unseen action behind closed doors) appears in this film as the father tries to observe the wedding night of his daughter through a keyhole. But through all this Lubitsch’s characters remain delightfully human. He seems to be able to walk the thin line between gross caricature and witty satire. *The Oyster Princess* was a big hit, so popular that UFA officials complained that they could not make enough prints to keep up with demand.



4.12 Shots from *The Oyster Princess* or *Die Austernprinzessin* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1919). Comic effect by exaggerating size (1), numbers (2) and space (3).

Lubitsch planned *Passion* (*Madame Dubarry*, 1919) as the “greatest German film of all time.” Although Lubitsch demanded that certain details be true to the period (all actors were draped in the finest silk and Brussels lace fashioned after the costumes of **Louis XV**’s court), he experimented with mise-en-scène. The result was a spectacular drama about the **French Revolution** that opened to an ecstatic audience at the première of the UFA-Palast am Zoo cinema, a grand picture palace, in September 1919. While Lubitsch offered a popular comedy, at the same time *Caligari* presented a new look, and proved to Europeans that Germany could make serious art films.

Between 1918 and 1923 Lubitsch made 18 more German films. In the process, he became world famous, along with Pola Negri, who starred in his historical spectacles. Indeed, in December 1920, *Passion* broke the blockade against German films coming into the United States, and introduced stars Pola Negri and Emil

Jannings and director Lubitsch to America. Within a year Lubitsch's *Deception* (best known under its German title *Anna Boleyn*, 1920), *Carmen* (1918), and *One Arabian Night* (*Sumurun*, 1920) had been shown in New York and, along with *Passion*, were deemed by a number of newspaper and magazine critics among the best films of the year. In 1924, Lubitsch and Negri moved to Hollywood.

Fritz Lang was born in 1890 Vienna. After one year of training as an architect he went to several art schools for painting and graphic design. During the First World War – Lang served as a volunteer and fought at the war front – Lang started to write film scripts and sold some of them to UFA producer and film director Josef May. After leaving the army in 1918 he moved to Berlin, and joined Erich Pommer's company as a reader, story editor, writer and actor of small parts. He scripted and directed his first film, *The Half-Caste* (*Halbblut*) in 1919.

In 1920 he met his future wife, scriptwriter Thea von Harbou, with whom he collaborated on many projects until their divorce in 1931. Together they wrote the script for *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* (*Doktor Mabuse, der Spieler*, 1921/22) that caused a revival of the serial – as *The Golem* (*Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam*, 1920) had done with the horror film. The film about the mysterious powers of the criminal Dr. Mabuse was a sensation in its day, making Lang a famous talent worldwide. These were German Expressionist films.

Lang then went on to make spectacles with German Expressionist touches: *Siegfried and Kriemhild's Revenge* (*Die Nibelungen: Siegfried; Die Nibelungen: Kriemhilds Rache*, 1924 – in two parts), *Metropolis* (1926), and *M* (1931). When Lang made *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (*Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, 1933), the Nazis banned the work in one of their first official acts. Afraid the Nazis might discover his Jewish background, Lang fled the country first to France, where he joined Erich Pommer – who had also left the country – and finally to Hollywood in 1934 after signing an agreement with MGM.

If *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was built on graphic contrasts, from sets, make-up, acting, and mise-en-scène, Lang's German films reflected a more plastic style. In *Siegfried* (1924) he built settings that gave a sense of realistic three-dimensional space but were not realistic in any other terms: the sets had abstract, symmetrical, monumental qualities. Lang had a large forest rebuilt in the studio with huge trees up to two meters in diameter. *Siegfried* was played by Paul Richter who was presented in the publicity surrounding the film as the German counterpart of Rudolph Valentino. *Siegfried* was the most expensive German film but was right away beaten by *Metropolis*.

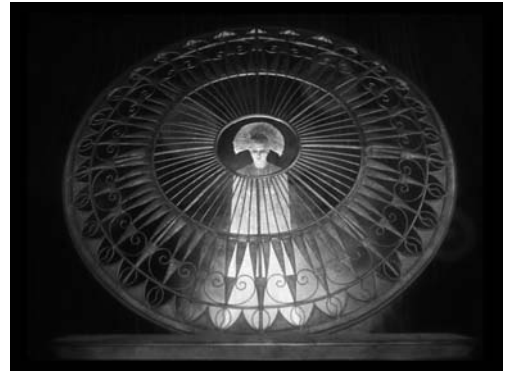
Lang's *Metropolis* is his epic. It took a year to film at the UFA studios and cost ten times the most expensive Hollywood film of the time. In this utopian film, Lang realized a vision of a city of the future with looming skyscrapers, vast suspension bridges, and a society of plenty. However, below ground masses of nameless workers function as no more than cogs to keep the prosperous world above humming along. Eventually the workers revolt, but in the end there is a reconciliation and the two strata come together.



4.13 *Madame Dubarry* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1919).

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

In *Metropolis* Lang used the elements of German Expressionism to distort the normal ways of developing characters, lighting, décor, and costume. Stark lighting, formless costumes, and mechanistic decor underscore the portrayal of the workers as an anonymous mass. Extreme stylization characterizes the scenes in which the workers, like machines, change shifts. The spiritual creator of this divided world, the scientist Rotwang, lives in the shadows of the skyscrapers, almost between the two worlds.



4.14 *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927).

Friedrich Wilhelm (F. W.) Murnau also came to the cinema after the First World War. After making his first film, *The Boy in Blue* (*Der Knabe in Blau*) in 1919, he directed some 20 films in Germany. Murnau is most famous for his pioneering work, *The Last Laugh*, starring Emil Jannings. Murnau moved his camera upstairs and down, indoors and out, telling the story of a hotel bellman who, although he must serve the rich, is still admired by his fellow tenement dwellers because of the status implied by his uniform. After he loses this job, the doorman sinks lower and lower. He is saved at the end (in the film's lone inter-title) by the wishes of an eccentric American millionaire who, having willed his fortune to the last man who served him, dies in the hotel lavatory where the bellman was working. In the end the hero gets the last laugh.

The Last Laugh was hailed as a masterpiece both in Germany and abroad, and Murnau was lauded for liberating the camera. In a famous drunk scene, for example, the camera records the bellman's distorted, staggering point of view. In the dream scene which follows, Murnau suggests an even more subjective experience using a host of Expressionist distortions of decor, costume, lighting, and figures. In a studio, Murnau created a city of angled dark buildings, flashing neon, reflecting car windows, and wet pavements.

Murnau made other German films. In *Nosferatu* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922), a faithful version of **Bram Stoker's** novel *Dracula*, he uses Expressionistic lighting, acting, and sets. The monster is tall, cadaverously thin, bald, bat-eared, rabbit toothed, and moves in short jerky steps. The effect is at once ludicrous, chilling and pathetic. Most disturbing is the scene in which *Nosferatu* approaches Nina's bedroom but is seen only as a huge, tormented, spiderlike shadow.

Tartuffe (*Herr Tartüff*, 1925), the penultimate film he made in Germany, is a screen adaptation of **Molière's** black comedy, again starring Jannings. His final German film was *Faust* (1926) with Jannings as Mephistopheles, starring alongside a distinguished cast from the European stage. Again the camera moved and soared, capturing the world of light and dark. After these triumphs, William Fox of Hollywood beckoned.

Georg Wilhelm (G. W.) Pabst was educated as an engineer, became an actor, fought in World War I, and afterwards became an Expressionist film director. The highlight of his long career came in the 1920s with *Secrets of a Soul* (*Geheimnisse einer Seele*, 1926), *The Love of Jeanne Ney* (*Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, 1927), *Pandora's Box* (*Die Büchse der Pandora*, 1928), *Westfront 1918* (1930), and *The Threepenny*



4.15 Building a bridge for the camera on the set of *The Last Laugh* or *Der letzte Mann* (F. W. Murnau, 1924).

Bram Stoker (1847–1912) was an Irish writer and theater manager. His vampire novel Dracula (1897) brought him world fame and was filmed many times.

Molière was the pseudonym of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622–1673), a French playwright, theater director, and actor. He is especially known for his comedies of characters and manners in which he commented on contemporary manners and morals.

Opera (*Die Dreigroschenoper*, 1931). He made films in the Expressionist style but was not an innovator. Expressionism should be defined as manipulation of mise-en-scène: Pabst's films deal with one aspect of mise-en-scène, the careful use of actors and actresses. He did appropriate all elements of the Expressionist style: to illustrate the workings of the human unconscious in *Secrets of the Soul*, he employed a shapeless, womblike house, and extreme contrasts of light and shadow. But he is best remembered for his ability to find and direct acting talents: Asta Nielsen and Greta Garbo in *The Joyless Street* (*Die Freudlose Gasse*, 1925), Brigitte Helm in *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, and Louise Brooks in *Pandora's Box*.

The lasting effects of German Expressionism

German Expressionism began to decline as a movement in the mid-1920s. Yet even though fewer films were being made, many of the tendencies were retained. Even in a comparatively realistic social film such as G. W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box*, the lighting and sets look Expressionistic, in particular the final Jack the Ripper scene in which the heroine dies. But in the end the power of Hollywood studios proved too strong and Hollywood lured away the best of the German talent. Mary Pickford offered Ernst Lubitsch a contract for United Artists in 1923. After supervising Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, Erich Pommer made his way to California to work for Paramount. F. W. Murnau, after *Faust*, moved to Fox to make *Sunrise* (Fox, 1927). German actors Conrad Veidt and Emil Jannings, and also cinematographer Karl Freund left by the early 1930s. Indeed, if the money of Hollywood was not enough of a draw, by 1933 the policies of the Nazis were another reason to leave Germany. Lang's *Testament of Dr. Mabuse* counted as the final film of the German Expressionist movement.

German Expressionism did have a significant impact on the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, especially through horror films of the 1930s and the *film noir* of the 1940s. Indeed, of all the alternative European cinemas, German Expressionism had the greatest impact on Hollywood. This was partly due to the fact that the Expressionist directors were used to working in a controlled studio environment similar to Hollywood's. In addition certain Expressionist techniques (distorted lighting and camerawork) were easily absorbed into the Classical Hollywood cinema.

The Hollywood movie moguls were not willing to accept all of the traits of the distortion of mise-en-scène, but they selectively approved the use of German low-key lighting for horror films and in mystery stories, distorted mise-en-scène in science fiction and horror films, and swooping camera movements and angles for shock effects in a selected number of cases.

The influence of German Expressionism reached its height in Hollywood in the *film noir* of the 1940s. This category of mystery story is characterized by the internal conflict in characters, unhappy endings, and night locations filled with distorted shadows. Hollywood chose carefully from the traits of German Expressionism, combined them with the traditional rules, and then meshed them with the narrative traits of the hard-boiled detective novel, like Raoul Walsh's *White Heat* (1949). The result was a type of film which proved popular through the 1940s and into the 1950s, often directed by German expatriates.



4.16 *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949).

Edgar Wallace (1875–1932) was a British novelist, playwright and screenwriter. His thrillers and crime novels were popular with filmmakers and many have been adapted for the screen.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) was a British writer. His most popular series of novels was that of the detective Sherlock Holmes. A well-known title is The Hound of the Baskervilles (1902).

FORGOTTEN HISTORIES

So far we have discussed the work of film directors whose experimental efforts are still remembered today. They made it into the canon of film history. But of course these are only points in history and for each filmmaker and film that is remembered stand many more that were forgotten. But since a researcher always has to choose what to tell and what to leave out these films do not get much attention. One such example is the 1920s film history of Great Britain. No famous films emerged; therefore, this decade is mostly left out and the films made are often dismissed as rather insignificant.

Great Britain was flooded with US productions and the British film industry was struggling to survive. UK audiences loved these US films but research has shown they cherished the same love for certain British productions like the filmed adaptations of British novels from the series of 'Eminent British Authors' produced by the Stoll Film Company. This was one of the biggest British production and distribution companies from 1918 until 1928. Owner Oswald Stoll believed that to compete with Hollywood he should turn to modern English literature and he started to produce adaptations of the works of writers like **Edgar Wallace**, H. G. Wells and many more. Stoll also reworked detective stories into serial films like *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1921) followed by *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1922) and *The Last Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1923), all based on the stories of **Arthur Conan Doyle** and directed by Maurice Elvey. Together they numbered 36 parts shown separately to keep the audience eager to find out what would happen in the next episode.

Another popular series Stoll produced was based on the Fu Manchu detective stories of the English writer Arthur Henry Ward known as Sax Rohmer: *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1923) and *The Further Mysteries of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1924). Rohmer's Fu Manchu stories were read all over the world. Already in the early 1920s, Japanese, Ukrainian and Dutch translations were available. The character of Dr. Fu Manchu continued to appear regularly in films – and even television series – until the late 1960s.



4.17 *The Further Mysteries of Dr. Fu Manchu* (Fred R. Paul, 1924).

Stoll had started out with an ambitious program with at least 24 literary adaptations per year. In 1923, however, he decided to produce only half that number. That way he could invest more money in fewer films, since he seemed to believe that lavish productions would become the standard. There was some truth in this but by lowering the number of films, the financial risks with one film became much higher. A failure with a high value movie would be much worse than low-budget flops. Profits were still made but had dropped from £42,144 in 1922 to £11,946 in 1923. The next year Stoll increased the number of productions again but decided to withdraw from film production in 1928 and concentrated solely on exhibition.

Yet another popular film series was that of *Squibs*, directed by George Pearson and starring Betty Balfour. Squibs, the name of the main character, was a working-class girl with a policeman as a boyfriend. After five films in which Squibs went through all kinds of exciting situations, from solving a murder in *Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep* (1922) to being chosen as a member of parliament in *Squibs MP* (1923), she finally marries her boyfriend in *Squibs' Honeymoon* (1923). The Squibs films had a universal touch and Betty's smile also captured the hearts of foreign audiences from the USA, the Netherlands, and the rest of Europe.



4.18 *Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep* (George Pearson, 1922).

Apart from the European (art) films another alternative film style developed in the former Soviet Union. This is the subject of the following chapter.

CASE STUDY 4

CARL DREYER – A DANISH INDIVIDUALIST

Not all filmmakers of the silent era worked as part of defined national movements. Many individualists worked in any national system where they could get a backer. They did not see themselves as part of any national movement.

Consider the case of Carl Dreyer, who, by 1909, was writing movie reviews for prestigious Copenhagen dailies. Dreyer was then asked to write scripts, and in 1915 joined the Nordisk Film company as a full-time screenwriter. Nordisk then asked him to direct his first film. But Dreyer's perfectionist approach to details of set-design led to clashes with Nordisk management, so he quit the most important studio in Denmark and went off on his own – making movies in Norway, Germany, Denmark, and France.



4.19 Maria Falconetti in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* or *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, a film by Carl Theodor Dreyer.

Dreyer moved to Norway to direct *The Parson's Widow* (*Prastankan*, 1920), but then received no more offers from the small Norwegian film industry. Next, Dreyer moved to Germany, the largest film industry in Europe at the time. In Berlin he signed up with Decla-Bioscop, the “artistic” wing of the giant UFA, to direct *Chained* (*Michael*, 1924), with Erich Pommer producing. Dreyer hired an international cast with Austrian Walter Slezak and Frenchwoman Nora Gregor (later to star in Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* (*La Règle du jeu*, 1939).

Pommer was pleased and signed Dreyer to make another film for UFA in Germany. However, after a disagreement with Pommer, who had apparently changed the ending of *Michael* without Dreyer's consent, Dreyer returned to Denmark to direct *Master of the House* (*Du Skal Aere Din Hustru*, 1925). Dreyer at first intended to shoot inside a typical two-room Copenhagen apartment, but this proved too constraining so he constructed a complete replica in a studio. Filming in this deliberately confined space, he achieved a wealth of intimate detail and drew praise for his facial close-ups. Later he would declare that nothing in the world can be compared to the human face. It is a land the filmmaker can never tire of exploring.

Master of the House enjoyed considerable success in France, prompting the Société Générale des Films to offer Dreyer a contract to make *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1928). Finally Dreyer had an ample budget, so he spent several months in research and preparation before starting production. Dreyer's script was based largely on the original transcripts of Joan's trial, though the 29 separate interrogations were telescoped into one single, harrowing sequence.

By “Joan of Arc” – a French film – this individual filmmaker had found a distinctive style. He explored Maria Falconetti's face, her suffering, her anguish, her eyes. Falconetti acted with a shaved head to add to her look of martyrdom. Critic after critic praised Dreyer's use of close-up after close-up in fashioning an abstract epic.

The Passion of Joan of Arc proved a world-wide critical success, but was a commercial flop. Thereafter Dreyer would make only five more feature films in the 40 years that remained of his life. He could only sustain his individualism if he took on other work to support his family.

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CHAPTER 5

EXPERIMENTS IN FILMMAKING: THE USSR

Introduction

Russian film before the revolution

The Russian Revolution: The first years of the new society

Constructivism

Lev Kuleshov

Soviet Montage

Sergei Eisenstein: Theorist and filmmaker

Experiments in realism: Dziga Vertov and Esther Shub

The traditionalist: Vsevolod Pudovkin

The outsider: Alexander Dovzhenko

The end of the Soviet Montage

*Case study 5: Evaluation in movie history – The case of the
Odessa Steps*

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we analyze film production in a non-capitalist state (the former Soviet Union). We start with a short introduction to Russian film before the Russian Revolution of 1917 that turned the vast nation into the anti-capitalist USSR with a nationalized movie industry. The new Soviet society inspired filmmakers to create films geared to the needs of working people. Film was not considered as an art in its own right but as a product in service of the masses, and was called the Soviet Montage cinema in which graphic and rhythmic editing provided the key connections between shots.



5.1 Moscow cinema, 1927.

Filmmakers Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Esther Shrub as principals of this style have long been celebrated for their innovations of editing by Europeans and film enthusiasts in the USA. Not all Soviet movie makers worked in the Montage style. For example, Alexander Dovzhenko stood outside the mainstream of Soviet experimentation.

RUSSIAN FILM BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

There was an active film industry in Russia before the 1917 revolution. The early Russian film industry arose during a time of turmoil and conflict. In 1894, when Tsar Nicholas II ascended the Russian throne, terrible famines caused riots and migration by peasants to the cities to seek work. In October 1905 a major social protest broke out, and after much bloodshed, Tsar Nicholas II allowed a bill of rights and a constitution, but did very little to bring about change. Discontent smouldered throughout the following years and was again fuelled when the Tsar got Russia involved in World War I. Poor grain harvests meant widespread starvation when food could not reach the central and north Russian provinces. Other bad harvests, and the loss of three million Russian soldiers and civilians during the First World War nearly brought the nation's economy to a standstill

In 1917 the Bolsheviks took over power and installed the Council of People's Commissars with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin as its chairman. It is in this turbulent time frame that the Russian film industry took its first steps. The Lumière brothers traveled to Russia as well and the audiences of St. Petersburg and Moscow saw the same films as those in London, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris. But Russian film production did not start until 1907, so early on Russian screens were filled with only foreign movies.

In 1907 Aleksandr Drankov, a photographer, established a studio in St. Petersburg. He was the producer of what is regarded as the first Russian fiction movie: *Stenka Razin* (1908). The film was shot entirely on location and tells the story of Stenka Razin, a historic bandit who roamed the Volga (the longest river in Russia) to kill and destroy. He traveled all the way to Persia and fell in love with a Persian princess while being married. Being in love he dawdled and the other bandits, afraid of the approaching troops of the Tsar, set up a trap. Stenka was made to believe his princess had a lover and in a drunken outrage he threw her into the Volga. Being too late to escape Stenka was captured and executed by the armies of the Tsar.

Another studio was opened by Aleksandr Khanzhonkov. Khanzhonkov had been in the film business since 1906 and had been trading film projectors and distributing films since then. He wanted to produce high

quality movies and believed Russian history and literature would serve as a good source for that. In 1915 Khanzhonkov & Co. employed two directors, fifty actors and five cameramen. Besides fiction films, the studio also produced travelogues, ethnographic and scientific films. In 1913 Khanzhonkov opened a picture palace seating 2,000 in Moscow. By 1916 US films had made their way to Russia but no one knew that a revolution was in the making.

Yevgeni Bauer, one of the most outstanding Russian directors of the early period, was employed by Khanzhonkov beginning in 1914. Bauer was trained at the Moscow College of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and started out as a set designer at the Pathé-Frères division in Moscow. In 1913 he directed his first film *Twilight of a Woman's Soul* (*Sumerki zhenskoi dushi*, 1913). Bauer was famous for his melodramatic films with dramatic endings. For example, the desperate suicide of the main male character who is rejected by the woman he so passionately loves provided the story for three films: *Twilight of a Woman's Soul*, *Child of the Big City* (*Ditya bol'shogo goroda*, 1914) and *Children of the Age* (*Deti veka*, 1915).

Bauer had an eye for detail and paid considerable attention to his sets. He was a master in lighting and his films presented striking examples of the use of **split screen** like in *Silent Witnesses* (*Nemye svideteli*, 1914), long **pans** and **tracking shots**, as in *Cold Showers* (*Kholodnye dushi*, 1914) and *The Dying Swan* (*Umirayushchii lebed*, 1917).



5.2 *Twilight of a Woman's Soul* or *Sumerki zhenskoi dushi* (Yevgeni Bauer, 1913).



5.3 *The Dying Swan* or *Umirayushchii lebed* (Yevgeni Bauer, 1917).

Framing

Split screen means that a frame is split into two (or more) separate images. For example two different actions happening at the same time in different places can be shown in one frame.

A **pan** is a movement of the body of the camera to the left or to the right while it stays in the same place.

A **tracking shot** is a shot made by a moving camera that “tracks” its subject and moves through space on rails (tracks).

Early Russian film differed from its European or US counterparts – a fact recognized by contemporary film reviewers and directors, as film scholar Yuri Tsivian has shown. Tsivian identifies a key narrative trait as responsible: the sad ending (in contrast to the happy ending). The unhappy ending of early Russian films was rooted in the nineteenth-century Russian melodrama. Films meant for export were shot in two versions: one for the domestic market with a depressing ending, for example the death of the main character, and one for the foreign markets with a happy ending to compete with Hollywood.

World War I stimulated native Russian film production as it had done in other European countries. Even though a severe shortage of film stock limited Russian film producers, they managed to create 500 films

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Bolsheviks means those in the majority (bolsjinstvo = majority). In 1903, a breakaway group, led by Lenin, split from the Russian Social Democratic Worker's Party and called themselves the Bolsheviks.

Mensheviks means "the ones in the minority," opponents of the Bolsheviks. They were less radical than the Bolsheviks and politically more oriented to Western democracies. After the Russian Revolution in 1917 they were repressed and many of their leaders left the country.

in 1916. However impressive this growth might have been, the Russian film industry was still small in comparison with that of France or the USA.

The revolution that started in October 1917 put a temporary hold on the further development of the Russian film industry. The Bolsheviks started to nationalize all industries, including movie making. That the Russian Revolution proved successful dictated a new direction in film history.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: THE FIRST YEARS OF THE NEW SOCIETY

During the first three years after the **Bolsheviks** took over power in 1917, the new leaders were involved in a civil war. Opposition arose from other parties like the **Mensheviks**, and Tsarist supporters. As a consequence many veteran film directors, actors, and technicians fled the new nation for France or Germany. This opened opportunities for new young filmmakers who embraced the new Soviet government.

The new Soviet government faced a difficult task of reshaping and controlling all sectors of life in the new society. Like other industries, filmmaking and exhibition underwent changes as leaders in November 1917 fashioned the *kinopodotdel*, a centralized subsection for film as part of the State Commission on Education. By July 1918 new Soviet leaders started to take charge of a new film industry with nationalization of movie making, the imposition of strict censorship, and the centralized allocation of all available raw film stock.

Soviet leader V. I. Lenin held the cinema in high regard. In a statement quoted repeatedly Lenin maintained that: "Of all the arts, for us [the new Soviet government] the cinema is the most important." Lenin wanted his cinema industry to help reach people in all sectors of his vast country. The silent cinema, with its stress on visual images rather than written language, was a particularly attractive tool for the new Soviet government since the majority of its citizens were illiterate. Furthermore, there was not one common language but more than a hundred different languages. As the post First World War years began, Lenin wanted to instruct the populus in the fundamental principles of **Marxism**; the silent film, properly used, he reasoned, would offer access that was otherwise unavailable through educational means.

Marxism refers to the theories of Karl Heinrich Marx (1818–1883), philosopher, historicist, economist, and spiritual father of social democracy and communism.

Marx stated that the capitalist system of his time exploited the workers and that this in the end would lead them to protest and overthrow the bourgeois society (the proletarian revolution). In order to divide the goods evenly amongst the people all production means should be administrated by the state.

To minimize the need for inter-titles, a special burden was placed on visual elements. Stories had to be straightforward and easily understood. To help spread the principles of the Revolution, the government established Agitation-propaganda trains ("agit-trains"), which presented speakers, theatrical performances, and film screenings as they toured the vast nation. The "agit-trains" toured constantly during the years after the Revolution as the Soviets consolidated power, featuring films that were short, simple, and direct. As they took the message from the cities to the provinces, workers gathered film material for hundreds of newsreels and longer works which celebrated the October Revolution. Eisenstein and Vertov, to name but two, learned much of their craft on such agit-trains.

But the Soviet transformation of film production, distribution, and exhibition proved a difficult and slow process. This was not only true for film. The whole nation suffered a severe economic crisis. The Bolsheviks – who had renamed themselves the Russian Communist Party – decided that only unconventional measures would work. In March 1921, Lenin approved the New Economic Policy (NEP) which allowed some space again for private entrepreneurship. For film this meant that foreign films could be imported once again – meaning young filmmakers studied Hollywood films. The filmmakers could also work for independent studios: Sevzapkino, Proletkino, Rus, and Mezhrabpom. By 1924, the Soviet leaders had created a state-run Sovkino to invest in big-budget films and to distribute the latest foreign (read: Hollywood) films. In 1926 the three most important studios were the merged Mezhrabpom-Rus, the Moscow Sovkino, and the Leningrad Sovkino.

The recovery of the Soviet film industry was made possible with the profits made on the distribution of foreign films. Lenin's long-term goal was for Soviet films to dominate screens all across the vast nation. But that would not happen until three years after Lenin's death in January 1924.

Before the Revolution every sizable town had one movie theater. Larger cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg (in 1914 renamed Petrograd and in 1924 again renamed Leningrad) offered their audiences a number of cinemas varying from a 2,000-seat cinema palace to a simple storefront theater. In rural areas people had to wait for the traveling cinema to come around or they had to travel to larger towns. Foreign movies were extremely popular. Until 1924 film imports into the USSR were topped by Germany, but then Hollywood took the lead. Little girls said they “wanted to marry” German film star Harry Piel and little boys “wanted to be like Harry Piel.” The most celebrated Hollywood stars were Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. *The Thief of Bagdad* (starring Fairbanks – 1924) played for a year in Moscow and indeed ran for three and a half months in its 1,000-seater theater Malaia Dmitrovka.

In 1926, when Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford visited the USSR, they were mobbed by fans just as they were when they toured the heartland of the United States. A Soviet-produced feature film, *A Kiss from Mary Pickford* (*Potselui Meri Pikford*, 1927) was made around the time of their visit. In the film a character called Goga is introduced as the “Russian Harry Piel.” The film was made from an idea by Anatoli Lunacharsky, who was the People's Commissar for Cinema. He preferred to program propaganda reels as only



5.4 *A Kiss From Mary Pickford* or *Potselui Meri Pikford* (Sergei Komarov, 1927).

part of a complete show; entertaining popular movies made up the rest of the program. Hollywood, he argued, drew audiences into theaters, and Soviet newsreels educated them. The popularity of Hollywood films also inspired imitation, some with direct reference to the original title: *A Thief, but not from Baghdad* (*Vor, no ne Bagdadskii*, 1926) directed by Vladimir Feinberg and *The American Girl from Baghdad* (*Amerikanka iz Bagdada*, 1931) by Nikolai Klado.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

For some years, even prior to the Russian Revolution, the predominantly representational traditions of Russian painting had been under attack by young artists. Inspired by the abstract forms emerging from European modernist movements such as Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism, the Soviets fashioned an alternative style called Constructivism. The new Soviet culture sought to combine technology, science, and art into the new Soviet modern art. Artists, intellectuals, and workers could labor side by side to make a new culture, a new society, and a new economy. They embraced cinema as the art of the masses.

According to Soviet Constructivists, all artists – including filmmakers – should seek to bridge the gap between the traditional creative process and the needs of a new Socialist society. Using art as a tool to build a radical new society had not been tried before, certainly not on such a large scale. Until Constructivism, no movement in modern art had been so thoroughly an expression of Marxist ideology or so closely connected with a true anti-capitalist revolution. Lenin was convinced that all artists – including filmmakers – could contribute to the enhancement of the needs of the new Soviet society. The film artist could do this by utilizing the tools of cinema to educate a revolutionary proletariat. All Soviet artists (or more accurately creative designers) should take a productive place in society alongside other workers, including scientists and engineers. Gone was art for art's sake. The new Soviet social order demanded new means and forms of expression based on science and engineering. The new means of expression in the cinema proved particularly attractive as mass audiences loved going to the movies.

LEV KULESHOV

Film, because of its complex technological base, its industrialized mode of production, and its process of factory-like assembly, provided the ideal test case for developing a working-class art for the new Soviet society. If there was one figure who pioneered the Soviet Montage movement, it was Kuleshov. The penetrating arguments and analysis of Lev Kuleshov grappled with new ways to organize film materials through montage editing, to shock and excite audiences.

Trained as a painter, before the Revolution, he had chosen a career as a stage-set designer. With the coming of the Russian Revolution, he moved to film, initiating theories which led to a famous series of editing experiments. He made his most significant contribution in helping to form the Soviets' film school. Kuleshov never made the celebrated films his students did, but his impact as a teacher and writer provided the basis for the Constructivist movement in Soviet cinema.

In the heady days of the early 1920s, Kuleshov had worked as an editor for the Soviet Cinema Committee and as such altered imported or prerevolutionary films in order to make them suitable for the new society. This taught him a lot about the importance of montage. It was the task of a film director to “compose” a whole movie from separate filmed pieces. Kuleshov noted that the Hollywood films brought into the USSR grabbed audiences' interest most intently and attributed this effect to the fact that Hollywood edited to fashion continuous, entertaining stories. Kuleshov believed film should have an educational function and break with continuity so as to underline the correct revolutionary message. To figure out how to do this, Kuleshov set up his own workshop to conduct experiments with non-Hollywood continuous editing.

He was intrigued with the basic process of editing. He postulated that each shot did not acquire meaning from its content but from its immediate context, that is from the shots which preceded it and the shots that followed it. This was strongly in line with the constructivist idea that individual materials that built up a work of art did have their own unique textures, but would create meaning only through the combination of parts.

One of the experiments Kuleshov conducted was called the “fabricated landscape.” As Kuleshov describes his experiment, we initially get a shot of a woman walking along a Moscow street. She stops and waves, looking off-screen. Cut to a man on a street that is in actuality two miles away. He smiles at her and they meet in yet a third location, shaking hands. Then together they look off-screen; cut to the Capitol (the government building of the USA) in Washington, DC. Kuleshov saw the potential for imaginary geography as both a useful production procedure and as a demonstration that editing could create a purely cinematic space, one not beholden to a “real” Hollywood scene cutting to take place in the same space and time. Because Kuleshov left out the **establishing shot** and used eyeline matches as postulated in the Classical Hollywood style, it was possible to make the audience believe they were viewing one geographic space.

Kuleshov saw that editing could abolish real-world constraints. It created events that existed only on the screen, with assistance from the viewer’s mind that had been trained by watching Classical Hollywood film and internalizing this one method of movie making as “natural.” In his film *On the Red Front* (*Na krasnom fronte*, 1920) he used documentary footage of battles mixed within a fictional narrative.

Kuleshov’s most famous experiment, the one he identified as the “Kuleshov effect,” involves a stock shot of the actor Ivan Mosjoukine, juxtaposed with different preceding and succeeding shots. Kuleskov alternated the same shot of Mosjoukine with various other shots (a plate of soup, a girl, a child’s coffin), and created a different meaning of the actor’s expression. Audiences read different emotions into the neutral expression on Mosjoukine’s face and raved about the actor’s refined acting. They pointed out his weighted pensiveness over the forgotten soup. They were touched by the profound sorrow in his eyes as he looked upon the dead woman, and admired the light, happy face as he feasted his eyes upon the girl at play. But Kuleshov knew that in all three cases the image of the face was exactly the same. In other words the stock shot and the neutral face of Mosjoukine combined with the other shots to evoke emotions with the audiences.

An establishing shot “establishes” the situation in a scene and explains to the viewer where it is taking place and where the character(s) is (are) positioned. It is often used at the beginning of a new scene.

SOVIET MONTAGE

Lev Kuleshov clearly demonstrated the power of editing as part of Constructivist theories that new filmmakers utilized. With the proper formulation of montage, they could make powerful statements on behalf of revolutionary change. As was true of many of the transformations taking place in the USSR at the time, there was constant argument about fundamental principles. V. I. Pudovkin, for example, believed shots in a film should be joined together like bricks in a building. Sergei Eisenstein argued that the maximum effect could be gained only if the shots did not fit together smoothly, but instead jolted the spectator.

The emphasis on editing gave the new cinema the name of Soviet Montage cinema – emphasizing graphic and rhythmic editing rather than editing dictated by Hollywood story-telling. Although the Soviet films did employ a narrative structure, they tended to downplay a character’s psychological development. Instead they stressed social forces as the root causes of change in people’s lives. Stories were the vehicles to help Soviets better understand the effects of the forces of economic change and social transformation, not to entertain. Often large groups of workers served as a “collective hero,” like in Eisenstein’s *Ten Days That Shook the World* (*Oktyabr*, 1928) and *The Old and the New* (*Staroye i novoye*, 1929).

This new film form had many consequences. For instance, because of the de-emphasis of individual personalities, the Soviet system developed no stars. Filmmakers cast unknowns, individuals who best reflected the look of the figures in the script. This concept of *typage* focused on stature and gestures rather than fame and renown. If there is a hero or central character in Soviet film, it is the Soviet people, the proletariat as a group.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Sergei Eisenstein studied other new European film movements and deliberately sought to use the juxtaposition of shots to make meaning rather than the manipulation of the *mise-en-scène* (as in German Expressionism) or the manipulation of camerawork and optical devices (as in French Impressionism). He impressed intellectuals in Europe with his theoretical writings put into practice.

With the Soviet Montage cinema, filmmaking and exhibition began to take on a greater and greater importance in the new Soviet, post-Revolutionary society. The significant turning point came when Eisenstein was commissioned to produce a film commemorating the aborted revolution in 1905. This film, *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, 1925) premiered at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater, a testament to its importance to state officials. Sovkino distributed it abroad, and within the world of intellectuals *Battleship Potemkin* proved an international success.

With the success of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, the Soviet film industry turned to its most ambitious set of projects, the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October 1917 Revolution. The impulse to produce the best, as well as the first, of the tenth anniversary films resulted in a race involving Esther Shub and Sergei Eisenstein at Sovkino and Vsevolod Pudovkin at Mezhrabpom-Russ. Pudovkin won and launched *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927). Weeks later, Sovkino completed its two films re-creating Russia's pre-revolutionary history entirely from archive footage – *The Great Road* (*Velikiy put*, 1927) and *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927), both directed by Shub.

But the most famous of the anniversary films was Sergei Eisenstein's *Ten Days That Shook the World*. He combined actual newsreel footage with reconstructed scenes to dramatize events which led up to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. He filmed it during the spring of 1927 in Leningrad where many of the actual events took place. Preparation for *Ten Days That Shook the World* included research into newspaper reports, photographs, and newsreels, as well as John Reed's book of the same title.

At Sovkino, Eisenstein abandoned other productions to create *Ten Days That Shook the World* as quickly as possible. Not released until 1928, *Ten Days That Shook the World* turned out to be the last of the celebrations of the Revolution. This delay was due in part to the film's revisions to reflect recent Soviet history, which by 1927 was the subject of intense ideological scrutiny and re-evaluation in the wake of Lenin's death and Leon Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist party. As such, *Ten Days That Shook the World* signaled the end of the Soviet Montage era, as new leader Josef Stalin ordered it to be extensively re-edited with references to the key role played by Stalin in the Russian Revolution.

When the new regime of Stalin developed the USSR's first five-year plan (1928–1932) to industrialize the country, the Communist Party defined for the first time the precise responsibilities of film workers as part of the plan. The authorities wanted obedient filmmakers and put an end to the experiments the new

On the eve of the 25th
Lenin took over the
direction of the uprising.



“Help is on the way!”

5.5 Intertitles used to express a revolutionary message in *Ten Days That Shook The World* or *Oktyabr* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1928).

V. E. Meyerhold (1874–1940) was a Russian theater director who developed the biomechanics acting method that maintains that emotions can be evoked by muscular activity. Not the internal psychological motivation but the right pattern of movements would evoke the appropriate emotional state of the actor.

cinema makers conducted so enthusiastically believing they were contributing to a new socialist society. The Stalinist authorities called the post-Soviet Montage films, socialist realism.

SERGEI EISENSTEIN: THEORIST AND FILMMAKER

Sergei Eisenstein is the most noted figure of the Soviet Montage movement. Born in Latvia in 1898, Eisenstein studied civil engineering and architecture in St. Petersburg. At age 19 Eisenstein's college education ended with the October Revolution, and he joined the Proletkult Theater in Moscow as a scenic artist. A year later he was part of **Meyerhold's** director's workshop for the live theater. Meyerhold's Constructivist theater project functioned as a vehicle for political propaganda and a testing ground for avant-garde techniques of artistic expression. In this Constructivist theater, art was a branch of production in the service of the state, for the advancement of the Revolution.

To better understand and improve theatrical performance, Eisenstein drew from such diverse sources as American slapstick comedy, the circus, classical mime, and the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, all to make fun of capitalists and capitalism. He called his method: montage of attractions. He drew attention to the construction of a stage play rather than hiding its means of production and pretending that it was a magical creation. Eisenstein argued that the theater should express the rage of the oppressed, and he drew on ideas from psychologists **Pavlov** and Freud to craft an aggressive assault on the audience, to shock them into political awareness. He and his theatrical compatriots took to the street, actively seeking to influence working-class audiences.

In 1924 Eisenstein turned to the cinema. His first film, *Strike* (*Stachka*, 1925), brought together violently conflicting ideas in a series of sketches which examined the idea of class that is basic to Marxist thought. Eisenstein's purpose was to teach the Soviet working class to unite to protest the inequities of the past. In *Strike* he attempted to merge what he had learned in the theater with Kuleshov's principles of editing to fashion a new cinematic form. In particular, he rejected orthodox stage acting in favor of using people as stock types which were immediately recognizable to audiences. Thus, the film actor and actress had no independent existence but functioned as part of the overall mise-en-scène which when combined with camerawork yielded strips of film which could be edited together to generate important ideas.

Eisenstein favored the collision of contradictory shots, to shock and agitate his audiences. He identified five kinds of montage: metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtone, and intellectual. The first simply identified its length, the next three drew analogies with music, and the final one sought to create ideas as shots clashed in certain formations. The 26-year-old Eisenstein planned *Strike* as one of eight projects in a state-sponsored series examining the struggles of the working class before the October Revolution.

Eisenstein's next film became the most famous of the Soviet Montage movement. *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) commemorated the abortive 1905 revolution which had been crushed by the Tsar. Eisenstein focused on sailors on one particular battleship who had staged an unsuccessful mutiny, depicting this rebellion as a central event leading to the later successful October Revolution of 1917. History and events were the motivating forces, not individual characters or stars. No one was unaffected by the revolution as an onlooking crowd was massacred on the steps that led to the port in Odessa.

Long shots conveyed the confusion and alarm as people scrambled down the steps as the Cossack troops came to disperse them. But rather than a star and her or his friends being gunned down, Eisenstein intercut eyes of terror, lips in silent screams, and feet stumbling; he merged shots of a bouquet being crushed, an umbrella being broken, and a woman losing her child in a carriage. Throughout Cossacks march in orderly

Commedia dell'arte was developed in Europe between 1500 and 1550 and refers to professional players who toured the courts and academies. It is characterized by stock characters and improvisation. The actors always played the same characters but improvised on the base of a plot outline.

Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936) was a Russian physiologist who believed that the psyche could be conditioned by mechanical reflexes. He succeeded in conditioning a dog by giving it food when a bell rang. Food stimulates the salivary glands and Pavlov showed that just the thought of food stirred by the sound of a bell caused saliva production.

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fashion down the stairs and kill all in their way. As time passes, the tempo quickens in a crescendo of death and destruction.

Rhythmic montage occurs as Eisenstein cuts between the steady marching of the soldiers and the chaotic scramble of the fleeing crowd. Tonal montage can be seen in the conflicts of planes, masses, and lights as the shadows of the soldiers' rifles and uniforms intersect the light reflecting off the fleeing citizens. Intellectual montage underscores the end of the sequence, when the Battleship Potemkin responds to the massacre by firing three times toward the tsarist headquarters.

The General Line (1929) was Eisenstein's last film which was clearly identified as in the Soviet Montage movement. To seek favor with the new Soviet political system, he experimented with "sensual montage." In *The General Line*, his last silent film, Eisenstein traced the transformation of a poor Russian farm village into a prosperous collective farm. Under pressure from the state authorities he abandoned many of his former key Soviet Montage principles; for example, he used an individual hero, a peasant woman who struggles for the establishment of the collective. Eisenstein was willing to construct a hero because the state had begun to denounce its most celebrated filmmaker as too formalist, accusing him of preferring to promote the aesthetics of montage over the content of the works.

By the autumn of 1928, Eisenstein found it more expedient to travel. He embarked on a tour of Western Europe and then later North America to meet with other filmmakers and intellectuals and to learn the technology of talkies. He even landed in Hollywood where he worked on several projects for Paramount Pictures, but none moved past the script stage. For example, he wanted to make a film based on Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy*, which, as he saw it, showed how adverse social conditions led to murder. Paramount wanted a melodramatic love story. His career as an icon of the Soviet Montage movement was over.



5.6 *Battleship Potemkin* or *Bronenosets Potyomkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

EXPERIMENTS IN REALISM: DZIGA VERTOV AND ESTHER SHUB

Two filmmakers reasoned that rather than shoot new footage, they would re-edit existing newsreels. This gave their work the look and feel of reality.

Dziga Vertov (which roughly translates as "spinning top") was born "Denis Kaufman," and originally studied music. Vertov was determined to fight for cinema truth – found in newsreels – to the exclusion of all other modes, in particular Hollywood films. He wanted to make a clean sweep of the past and begin anew.

In 1918 Vertov started as chief editor of *Kinonedelya* (*Cine-Week*), a series of newsreel programs which he re-organized, compiled, and edited. This work gave him a chance to experiment with ideas of montage since that was the lone variable with which a film compiler could work. In 1919, he joined an agit-train that included a theater troupe, a movie theater, cinematographers to record actual events, a film laboratory to process what was shot, and an editing room. He traveled throughout the USSR from April 1919 through November 1921. His film, *Agit-train Vtsik* (*Agitpoedz Vcik*, 1921) documented this journey by incorporating footage taken by the unit's cinematographers, including Vertov himself. Indeed throughout the early 1920s, Vertov spread his message of film reality on agit-steamboats and agit-trains to take newsreels directly to the people.

Vertov's pro-reality stance earned him praise in high places. Early in 1922 Lenin told the commissar of education, Anatoli Lunacharsky, that all film programs in the USSR ought to include newsreels to reflect the new reality of the changing nation. With Lenin's support, in May 1922, Vertov launched his famous *Kino-Pravda* (*Film Truth*) newsreel series, a regular monthly release done by Vertov, his wife, Elizaveta Svilova, and his brother Mikhail Kaufman.

Kino-Pravda sent its camera operators to record the rebuilding of railroads and streetcar lines, and the creation of airports and hospitals. These "fragments of reality" were juxtaposed through superimpositions, split screens, and slow motion to show the truth about the change in the new society. Often *Kino-Pravda* films were the only items in Soviet cinema programs which dealt directly with the daily reality of the workers in the audience.

The editing in *Kino-Pravda* was dazzling. In one sequence in the eighteenth issue, Vertov skillfully juxtaposed shots of various machines and striking workers singing the "Internationale" (the song of Socialists all over the world). Indeed by the 13th issue Vertov and his comrades had altogether abandoned the news format for a series of documentary films on current concerns in the quest for the true Communist state. To convey a sense of the breadth of the Revolution, he included aerial footage of cities, factories, and villages in his vast nation to capture "life caught unawares." Sometimes he would use a hidden camera, sometimes he stayed so long on site that people forgot he was there.

In 1924 Vertov made his first feature-length film *Kino-Glaz* (*Kino-Eye*, 1924). Again working with his brother and wife, Vertov was able to fuse his interest in the formal aspects of the cinema with his political pre-occupations. *Kino-Eye* contains an astonishing play between testimony and evidence: there are process shots, rhythmic montage, frenzied accelerations, repetitions, and ellipses – all the possible tools of the cinema editor playing with his art and craft. Vertov wanted to define the nature of the cinema by stripping bare preconceptions of its use.

To make maximum use of all the footage he was accumulating, Vertov began to reassemble it into longer and longer films. Among the most successful of these compilation films was *One Sixth of the World* (*Shestaia chast mira*, 1926), in which he used short intermittent inter-titles to address the audience: "You in the small villages ... You on the oceans ... You Uzbeks ... You Kalmiks ..." He also directly addresses various occupations, age groups, and other classifications of Soviet society. The film ended by reminding Soviet citizens that "You are owners of one-sixth of the world." The incantation style is reminiscent of Walt Whitman, an American writer who Vertov much admired.

Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chevolek s kinoapparatom*, 1929) offered the full realization of his decade of experiments, a theory of film on film. The film's central figure is a cameraman, traveling through Moscow. He involves himself in its daily dawn-to-dusk activities, observing all walks of life. Vertov

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orchestrated superimpositions, animation, split screens, fast motion, seemingly all possible camera angles, and moving cameras shots, all cut together in a rhythm which gives this film a unique vitality.

Consider the opening. We see an empty theater; the audience arrives; the projectionist readies the film; the orchestra begins to play; the film comes to the screen – indeed the very film we are about to watch. Throughout *Man with a Movie Camera* the viewer is constantly reminded of the camera's presence. In Hollywood, reflections of the camera in a window would be considered “mistakes.” In Vertov's film, it is part of the very structure and theme: the illusions of the cinema in our process of knowing the world. We see the cameraman, with his bulky apparatus, edging up a smokestack, climbing out of an enormous beer mug, being hoisted by a crane, walking into the sea, running across rooftops, and working down a mine shaft. Some of these shots (by a second camera operator) were done live; others done through superimpositions in the post-production process.

The self-reflexive aspect of the *Man with a Movie Camera* becomes more and more complex as it progresses. For instance, a shot of a motorcyclist is followed by a shot of the cinematographer filming the motorcyclist and then the same sequence being projected in the theater. Later, in the midst of more activity, the frame freezes and is followed by a series of stills; then these same frames are shown in the hands of an editor. We see the editor hang the strip of film on a drying rack along with other strips, some from sequences we have already seen. *Man with a Movie Camera* ends with a return to the theater. The camera and tripod “assemble” on the screen, “take a bow,” and “walk off.” The conclusion includes a jumbling of shots from previous scenes intercut with shots of the audience watching those scenes. Then Vertov turns the camera lens toward the audience, superimposed on a human eye. Vertov's theme is clear – he has shown us the perceived version of reality on film.



5.7 *Man with a Movie Camera* or *Chevolek s kinoapparatom* (Dziga Vertov, 1929).

Welcomed in 1929 as an exciting view of the future of the cinema, *Man with a Movie Camera* still seems experimental because its vision was never realized. It remains a sophisticated, complex alternative to the Hollywood cinema. Unfortunately after *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov – like Eisenstein before him – fell out of political favor. His disinterest in scenarios was labeled “antiplanning”; his experiments in editing were declared too formalistic. Vertov, his wife and brother exited to studios in the Ukraine, apparently to set some distance between them and the powers that be in Moscow. But like workers in Stalin's USSR the Vertov trio simply became state workers, grinding out newsreels on predictable schedules, adhering to the dictates of state-approved content and style.

Esther Shub (Esfir Surazh) compiled newsreels to create vivid portraits of Soviet history. Her films also depended upon original newsreel material which she re-edited to instruct audiences of the time. Shub is noted for two principal Soviet Montage works: *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927), a pioneering example of the compilation film, and *The Great Road* (*Velikiy put*, 1927), another compilation film, as her anniversary effort. But there was too much missing (or never shot) about the crucial events of the Russian Revolution and so she had to reconstruct certain events. In the official reaction of the day, Shub was praised for her efforts while Eisenstein, for *Ten Days That Shook The World*, was condemned. She was seen as faithful to the official history, while Eisenstein was damned for putting too much of his own personality into the work. Nearly a century later it can be argued that Shub was as creative with the truth as Eisenstein.

Esther Shub was born in Soviet Ukraine in 1894 and studied literature in Moscow. During the Revolution she took a position with the theater department of the People's Branch of Education and worked with Meyerhold. In 1922 she joined Goskino to help re-edit imported films for Soviet distribution. She worked with Eisenstein and introduced him to the principles of constructing a different meaning through montage. From 1927 to 1928 she created her trilogy about revolutionary transformation: *The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy*, (*Rossiya Nikolaya II i Lev Tolstoy*, 1928), *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* and *The Great Road*. If the Soviet Montage school was based on principles of editing, Esther Shub stood as one of the foremost editors in the USSR during the 1920s. After gaining considerable reputation and experience re-editing imports, she became the master of the compilation film. She brought to the genre, based solely on editing pre-existing footage, a flair for using all sorts of seemingly odd pieces to create stunning effects. In 1932 she experimented with sound in *Komsomol – Leader of Electrification* (*Komsomol – Shef elektrifikatsii*, 1932), and embraced socialist realism, with its stress on a straight-forward, non-experimental, almost Hollywood sense of editing. Only occasionally was she able to reproduce that former flair: self-reflexive moments of characters looking directly into the lens, microphones visible in the scene, to remind viewers that this was a movie, not real life.

THE TRADITIONALIST: VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN

V. I. Pudovkin was the most conventional of the Soviet filmmakers of the 1920s. Since all the major talents of the Soviet silent era, in one way or another, conformed to the montage style, it is easy to see their work and writings as homogeneous. But there were significant differences, both in their theories and in their films. This certainly was the case for Pudovkin, who rejected the radical editing style of Eisenstein, while retaining the Marxist themes.

Vsevolod Illarionovitch Pudovkin was born in 1893 in Penza, Russia, and journeyed to Moscow University to study physics and chemistry. After being wounded in World War I, his comfortable life was forever shattered by the Russian Revolution. In 1920 Pudovkin went to film school to learn to become an actor. Lev Kuleshov was his teacher. Once he graduated, Pudovkin settled on directing, although frequently appeared in small parts in his own films.

As Kuleshov's student, Pudovkin's first films were mixtures of the documentary and fiction genres. *Chess Fever* (*Shakhmatnaia goriachka*, 1925) is a short comedy which incorporates both documentary footage (from an international chess tournament) and acted scenes. *The Mechanics of the Brain* (*Mekhanika golovnogo mozga*, 1926) aimed to popularize Pavlov's theories of conditioned reflexes and corresponded with the scientific-educational film mode of film documentary. But three fictional works – *Mother* (*Mat*, 1926), *The End of St. Petersburg* (*Konets*



5.8 Shots from *The End of St. Petersburg* or *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1927).

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Sankt-Peterburga, 1927), and *Storm Over Asia* (*Potomok Chingis-khana*, 1928) – would make his reputation as a member of the Soviet Montage movement.

All three of these films were popular in the USSR since they were built on the techniques developed by Hollywood. That is, Pudovkin sought to fashion popular works on revolutionary subjects. Here was a director who never ventured too far with his cinematic experiments. As a consequence, although he is associated with Eisenstein and Vertov, Pudovkin's work might very well be closer to such films as *The Living Corpse* (*Zhivoi trup*, 1929), based on a Tolstoy play, directed by Fedor Otsep, and *The Girl with the Hatbox* (*Devushka s korobkoi*, 1927), a satirical comedy, directed by Boris Barnet, both of which drew audiences almost as large as did imported Hollywood films.

While *Mother*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, and *Storm Over Asia* were concerned with various aspects of the Revolution, they focused on the involvements and conflicts of one individual, not the mass hero of Eisenstein. *Mother*, based on a Maxim Gorky novel, was set during the aborted 1905 revolution. Rather than concentrate on a shipload of sailors as Eisenstein did in *Battleship Potemkin*, *Mother* chronicles the plight of the title character, who inadvertently causes her politically active son to be sentenced to prison, and eventually shot as he tries to escape. With his death, his mother's consciousness is raised, but in the end she too is killed, trampled to death by a Tsarist army which attacks as workers protest.

Although the theme of a mother's love for her son is stretched to fit into a propaganda framework, the film is edited in a harmonious way like a musical composition, not to promote conflict. Pudovkin sought to merge pieces of film together to make a synthetic whole. For example, when the son receives some happy news while in prison, his hands are seen energetically in motion, and a close-up of the bottom part of his face is intercut with shots of a sunlit stream, birds cavorting in a pond, and a happy child. If there is a montage influence, it is what Sergei Eisenstein would label sensual montage.

Like Eisenstein, Pudovkin was more than a film actor and director; he was fascinated with this new medium and wrote a great deal about it. Lev Kuleshov introduced him to montage as a force in the cinema, and Pudovkin, in his writings and films, explored the power of intercutting seemingly different images together. His essays on film theory, most notably "The Film Scenario," and "Film Director and Film Material," stress the power of editing.

For Pudovkin, for instance, it was unnecessary for a film actor or actress to over-perform or over-gesture as a stage actor or actress may have. Figures in films should "underplay," and the editor can then juxtapose their images to create the desired effect. Pudovkin saw montage as an interaction of many and various elements, including the script, acting, and later, color and sound. He contended that montage, as the highest form of editing, was the foundation of film art, that montage revealed the relationship between film and real life.

THE OUTSIDER: ALEXANDER DOVZHENKO

Alexander Dovzhenko stood outside the mainstream of Soviet experimentation. Through emotional and poetic expression, almost melancholy in simplicity and style, he celebrated the farmers and agriculture of his native Ukraine. Dovzhenko placed more emphasis on the image than his famous associates of the 1920s. Dovzhenko's reputation rests with two films: *Arsenal* (*Arsenal*, 1929) and *Earth* (*Zemlia*, 1930). *Arsenal* tells of the tumultuous period of Soviet history after the First World War. Dovzhenko does not bombard the viewer with harsh images, but with lyrical ones. Educated in science and economics in the years immediately preceding the Russian Revolution, he worked as a high school teacher (and organized

demonstrations), served in the army in the First World War, and then became an artist and cartoonist. He came to film late, not establishing his reputation until 1929 with *Arsenal* and in 1930 with *Earth*. He was able to study Eisenstein's *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin*, Pudovkin's *Mother* and *End of St. Petersburg*, Vertov's *Kino Eye* and *One Sixth of the World* and Shub's *The Great Road* (1927) – as well as works of German Expressionism and French Impressionism. He merged these influences into his complex, unique style.

Arsenal (subtitled: *The January Uprising in Kiev in 1918*) was made for the Ukrainian studio VUFKO (All-Ukrainian Photo Cinema Administration) and released in Kiev in February 1929. It was filmed in and around Kiev in the latter half of the previous year. Dovzhenko did the editing, screenplay, and direction. In many ways *Arsenal* is a more radical text than even *Ten Days That Shook the World*. For example, in *Ten Days That Shook the World* Eisenstein used montage to create meaning within the space and time of the accepted events of the Russian Revolution. In *Arsenal*, the symbolism is purposely esoteric, with seemingly deliberate barriers to cloud the viewer's perception, so that it is not clear, even after a number of viewings, precisely what is going on. Dovzhenko's theme was the horror of war, as symbolized by an arsenal of weapons, not a celebration of the Russian Revolution.

Earth seems to be Dovzhenko's most accessible film, alternating between static shots of remarkable beauty and dynamic narrative episodes. The opening sea of grain, moonlit lovers, and a farmer posed between two massive oxen look like photographic stills, rather than shots in a moving picture. But the introduction of the tractor prepares the way for an accelerating montage of reaping and processing grain on a collective farm.

Indeed *Earth* ends with one of the longest and most elaborate examples of parallel montage in film history. The sequence begins as Vassily's father, converted from his conservative state of mind by his son's death, rejects the offices of the town's priest. Crowds of people, who were first seen as onlookers at the tractor's arrival, begin to mill together and march at the dead man's funeral. The father joins them as they begin to sing (this is a silent film). Their ranks swell until another young man, who will lead them in the social transformation in place of the now-dead Vassily, begins to make a speech. Throughout the march and speech, Dovzhenko repeatedly cuts away to the murderer fleeing from the village. As the speech begins, the murderer shouts his confession from the graveyard, unheard. Other elements intervene. As the crowd passes Vassily's house, his pregnant mother goes into labor and gives birth. At the end of this striking sequence Dovzhenko cuts rapidly from images of the singing crowds to the labor pains of the mother to the fleeing killer to the open casket, in a breathtaking rhythmic orchestration. The film ends with images of the ripe fruit, rain, new lovers, and a total reaffirmation of the earth as the source of all power. Individuals may die, but the earth goes on.



5.9 Sequence of villagers anticipating the arrival of new technology to improve agriculture. *Earth* or *Zemlia* (Alexander Dovzhenko, 1930).

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Earth, released in April 1930 in Kiev, is a tribute to life in the Ukraine, the birthplace of Dovzhenko. It is a film about rural life, of the struggles of a single village. There is no formal story, but the structure of the film revolves around the triumph of modern farm equipment over primitive methods of agriculture. Youthful peasants join together to purchase a tractor to more efficiently operate their farms. Men and women fasten together stalks cut from the earth, a threshing machine toils in the fields, and eventually the peasants produce an abundant harvest. Dovzhenko captures the meaning of the earth to these people, who believe the land must be lovingly nurtured so that all can be fed. The earth as a provider goes on, from one generation to another.

But *Earth* is not apolitical. It was meant to herald a new beginning to Soviet farm life. As we might expect from a film of such complexity, it was controversial in its day. Many complained that the style of the film overwhelmed its message of the superiority of the collective mechanized farm. It failed, some noted, to directly deal with the specific concerns of the Revolution; its themes were too universal.

Dovzhenko is a difficult director with whom to deal. Whereas Eisenstein and Pudovkin, for example, studied Western cinema and in Moscow participated in the mainstream Constructivist movement, Dovzhenko operated outside, in Kiev, within the deep roots of his Ukrainian background and culture. Unlike his more cosmopolitan contemporaries, Dovzhenko took material from such sources as regional folklore, thus making them much more difficult for outsiders to analyze. Yet Dovzhenko created films that alluded to historical and cultural settings. His films did take up issues of immediate concern to his fellow countrymen and women. Of those made in the 1920s, only *Zvenigora* (1928) and *Arsenal* were set outside the time of the film's production, and they were historical dramas dealing with recent Soviet political and social history.

THE END OF THE SOVIET MONTAGE

The Soviet Montage movement drew to a close when a changing Soviet government consolidated under Josef Stalin in the 1930s. The new regime sought a new approach to the cinema. The montage style was criticized as too formalist, too esoteric. The new government wanted simple films that would be readily understandable to all audiences. Stylistic experimentation and non-realistic subject matter were denounced, censored, or simply not funded.

By 1934, the government, by then directly under Stalin, called for a new style of cinema called socialist realism, grounded in a Hollywood-like style but projecting the accepted Soviet anti-capitalist world view. Stalin ended all experimentations in Soviet Montage. He dissolved Sovkino and replaced it with Soyuzkino, a government agency responsible to the Politburo's Economic (rather than, as previously, its Education) Department. Stalin's appointee, Boris Shumyatsky, formally adopted socialist realism as the official policy, stressing traditional, non-experimental, realist films.

With the end of the Soviet Montage style we end the silent film period. Filmmakers and inventors had experimented with adding sound with the help of a phonograph, films were accompanied by orchestras or with someone explaining the action but by the mid-1920s film inventors had succeeded in adding sound to the filmstrip. In Section 2 we analyze how the coming of sound profoundly changed film production and exhibition. At first national film industries profited from the language barrier and national film productions flourished but soon Hollywood forced back native film production and dominated most of the film screens at least in the Western world.

CASE STUDY 5 EVALUATION IN MOVIE HISTORY – THE CASE OF THE ODESSA STEPS



5.10 Shots from *Battleship Potemkin* or *Bronenosets Potyomkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925).

The most often shown clip in film courses has long been Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) – the Odessa Steps sequence. In 1958 critics at the World's Fair at Brussels, Belgium, named *Battleship Potemkin* the greatest film ever made. And for decades movie historians assumed that

the “Odessa Steps sequence” was the best method to teach the power of editing – something Hollywood would never do.

Eisenstein shows the people of Odessa Russia supporting the revolt of the crew of the battleship and then how the Tsarist troops systematically slaughter these ordinary people. Those interested in cinema are shocked at the violence and slaughter of ordinary people – a subject rarely treated in Hollywood cinema except in the horror genre. He purposely constructed his sequence not for Hollywood continuity, but to demonstrate the power of a different type of editing – explained by Eisenstein in his writings.

The attack on the Odessa Steps startles the viewer because there has been no indication of the coming of the Cossacks. Through its cinematic power Eisenstein made *Battleship Potemkin* seem sympathetic to audiences of any political persuasion. The Progressive Left called it a Socialist classic; the Conservative Right labeled it a brilliant example of pure propaganda.

The Odessa Steps sequence shows innocent citizens shot and trampled en masse by the brutal soldiers. The sequence begins with the inter-title “Suddenly;” then townspeople begin to run from the soldiers down the vast steps toward the camera. This action moves generally from left to right. Several different figures are isolated and intercut throughout the sequence: a boy without legs propelling himself forward with his arms, a group of women, and a mother running with her child in a carriage.

When the orderly rows of troops are shown entering from top left, that shot provides a dramatic graphic contrast to the chaos of the mass of people. In the first major crosscutting episode within the sequence, the mother becomes separated from her son in the crowd and shots of her turning back for him are intercut with shots of him falling and being trampled by the crowd. Her movement against the crowd to retrieve his body in her arms, from right to left across the screen, is contrasted with shots of the oncoming crowds and the soldiers’ inexorable progression behind them.

Eisenstein sought pathos from the audience. Yet what he did was offer a tale as fictional as any Hollywood film – a “based upon” historical account. No such event ever took place; indeed the inspiration for Eisenstein came from events he read about that happened in Baku, hundreds of miles away. Odessa Steps works so well because it is as simple as any Hollywood film of spectacle, but in an altogether different style.

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**THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO ERA
1928–1950**



**FILM
HISTORY**

1920

1930

1926–30: transition from silent film to “talkies”

1928: 1st Mickey Mouse cartoon released

1929: 1st Academy Awards

FILM

1928: *The Singing Fool*

1930: *Under the*

1931: *Little*

1934: *The*

1934: *L’A*

1934: *The Man Who*

1937: Disney’s *Snow Whi*

1939: *Gone wi*

1939: *The Rules*

HISTORY

1929: Stock Market crashes

1929–39: Great Depression

1931: Empire State

**1932: Amelia Earheart is
across the**

1933: Prohibitio

1933: New Deal legislatio

1933: Hitler becomes Ch

1934: Bonnie & Clyd

1936–39: Spani

1937–45: Sino J

1938: Radio broadcast

causes widesp

1939–45: Wo

30

1940

1940s: Italian Neo-realism
1940s: The height of the Bing Crosby
and Bob Hope road movies
1947: *Cinema 16*, NYU

Roofs of Paris
e Caesar
Sailors
talante
o Knew Too Much
ite & the Seven Dwarfs
th the Wind
e of the Game

1941: *The Lady Eve*
1941: *Citizen Kane*
1942: *The Magnificent Ambersons*
1943: *Casablanca*
1944: *Double Indemnity*
1944: *Meet Me in St Louis*
1945: *Open City*
1946: *The Best Years of our Lives*
1946: *Shoeshine*
1946: *The Big Sleep*
1948: *The Bicycle Thief*

e Building opens
1st woman to fly solo
Atlantic
n ends in US
n first proposed in US
nancellor of Germany
e killed by police
ish Civil War
apanese War
of War of the Worlds
pread panic
orld War II

1941: Japanese attack Pearl Harbor
1941: USA join WWII
1944: D Day (6 June)
1945: US drop atomic bombs on
Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending WWII
1945: United Nations founded
1949: China becomes Communist Republic
1949: NATO established



CHAPTER 6

THE COMING OF SOUND AND THE STUDIO SYSTEM

Introduction

The invention of the sound film

Innovation and diffusion

Hollywood's major studios

Hollywood's minor studios

Socio-economic shocks

World War II

Case study 6: The coming of sound to Europe – The triumph of national film production in Holland

INTRODUCTION

The coming of sound progressed in three phases: the invention of the new technology, the innovation of selling talkies to the public, and the widespread adaptation of the talkies by the mainstream Hollywood cinema, including distribution around the world.

The motion picture industry in the USA was not involved in the invention of the necessary synchronized sound technology; this took inventions by the largest telephone and radio companies in the USA. When the technology was available, the Warner Bros. and Fox studios pioneered talkies through the presentation of short sound motion-picture recordings and newsreels with sound, respectively.

The coming of sound led to the consolidation of five vertically integrated companies making talkies, distributing them around the world (with voices dubbed in native languages), and exhibiting them in their owned and operated theaters. These became the fabled Paramount, Loew's/MGM, RKO, Fox, and Warner Bros. studios. Three smaller companies created talkies and distributed around the world yet did not own theaters – Universal, Columbia, and United Artists. Two studios specialized in making only low-budget films – Monogram and Republic studios. These ten studios became “Hollywood” from 1930 to 1950.

All these Hollywood studios had to weather the downturn in demand for movie shows caused by the **Great Depression**, and to coordinate an industry self-regulated Production Code so as not to offend anti-movie groups demanding governmental censorship. Later, they experienced their heyday with the boost in demand in the USA caused by the **Second World War**.

THE INVENTION OF THE SOUND FILM

The coming of sound during the late 1920s caused the technology of the cinema to change in a fundamental way. The film strip thereafter contained images and sounds. During the silent film era, cinemas used live musicians to add sound. Picture Palaces with as many as 5,000 seats employed 75-piece orchestras, complete with several members whose sole job was to provide sound effects and noises. Every neighborhood picture house had at least a hardworking piano player plunking out a musical accompaniment. This meant that the experience of watching and hearing the cinema presentation varied from place to place.

Inventors had long sought to develop a mechanical sound system to supply needed music and even dialogue. Indeed, Thomas Edison originally conceived of his version of cinema as image and sound. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, scientists (including Edison) struggled to mechanically link phonograph technology to the silent motion picture. This marriage never worked because early efforts to maintain synchronization of speaker and speech failed. No one could coordinate sound and image recorded on incompatible equipment. Furthermore, as movie theaters grew into picture palaces, there was no adequate loudspeaker system that could fill all parts of a large auditorium.

Between 1907 and 1913 inventor-entrepreneurs presented film audiences with the Vivaphone, Synchroscope, Chronophone, the Cameraphone, and the Cinephone. Each tried to mechanically link silent cinema and the phonograph; each failed. In 1913 Thomas Edison, then America's most famous inventor, proclaimed he had the answer. His Kinetophone employed a power amplifier and a sophisticated system of pulleys and controls to synchronize sound and image. Heralded by notice after notice, the world premiere of this marvel from the workshop of the Wizard of Menlo Park – as was Edison's nickname – was presented by the Keith-Albee vaudeville organization. Edison's American Talking Picture Company was set up expressly to produce and distribute movies with sound.

The Great Depression (1927–1937) was the longest and most severe economic crisis in Western history. In particular the United States of America was hit very hard, where 25 percent of the employed lost their jobs in 1929.

The Second World War (1939–1945) was the bloodiest war in human history between the so-called Axis powers Germany, Italy and from 1941 Japan, and the Allies (Great Britain, France, the former Soviet Union and from 1941 the US).

Unfortunately, audiences found the Kinetophone inferior to even the average movie house orchestra. At Keith's Union Square Theater in New York City, patrons actually booed the latest Edison miracle, with good reason. Its synchronization failed more often than it succeeded; music came out in harsh and tinny tones; spectators at the back of the hall could not hear. It had taken Thomas Edison himself to demonstrate once and for all that a simple marriage of the phonograph to silent film technology would never work. It seemed that if the world's "greatest inventor" could not create talkies, no one could.

The silent black and white cinema remained the standard, not for a lack of trying to create movies with sound. That was left to the theater owner and his or her staff. Yet outside forces were creating the tools to record images and sounds simultaneously. Scientists had to develop apparatus that would record and synchronize sound and image with a quality and tone suitable for presentation to large audiences. The American Telephone & Telegraph Company (the monopoly telephone corporation in the USA at the time) fashioned both recording of sounds and images. So did the General Electric Laboratories working with the Radio Corporation of America. Thus the technology to make talkies came from outside the Hollywood film industry and it was ready by the mid-1920s.

INNOVATION AND DIFFUSION

There were two more phases in the coming of sound. At the innovation phase, companies had to figure out how to market sound films to the public, knowing of the inherent risk in trying to sell something everybody knew would not work. Finally, in the diffusion phase, the major movie companies had to decide to accept the new technology and substitute talkies for the standardized silent film.

The innovation and diffusion phases of transformation took place between 1926 and 1930. Seemingly overnight the silent film era ended; by 1930 Hollywood switched completely to talkies. In 1925 silent filmmaking was the standard; a mere five years later Hollywood produced *only* films with sound. The speed of the transition surprised almost everyone. Within months, formerly perplexing technical problems were resolved, marketing and distribution strategies were reworked, soundproof studios were constructed, and 15,000 theaters were wired for sound.

The apparatus of presentation became standardized. By 1930 the making of talkies was homogeneous. And as a by-product of this technical change the Hollywood studio system became a set of eight companies dominating production, world distribution, and in the USA, presentation of Hollywood films in their first and second run theatres. Since Hollywood so dominated the film business throughout the world, no foreign film industry dared not adopt sound, and by 1935 sound-on-film had become the world standard.

The transformation to sound films did not begin in Hollywood. It took one of the world's largest corporations, American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T), to overcome the frustrating technological problems Edison could not resolve. During the 1910s AT&T's scientists, working in a unit that would later become known as Bell Labs, perfected an electronic sound-on-disc recording and reproducing system to monitor and test its new long distance telephone network. As a spin-off of this research, AT&T scientists invented the first true loud speaker and sound amplifier. Combining these inventions with movie technology produced a system which could record and project clear, vibrant sounds to audiences even in theaters as large as the newly built Capital in Times Square with its 5,000 seats.

In 1922 AT&T began to try to sell its new sound technology. Despite the technical reputation of AT&T and its financial muscle, the barons of the Hollywood film industry, fully cognizant of the multitude of embarrassing

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

failures of talkies a decade earlier as well as the substantial investment required, passed when initially offered the new equipment.

A minor Hollywood company, Warner Bros., took up the challenge. The brothers Warner (led by eldest Harry, assisted by Abe in distribution and Jack and Sam in production) had come a long way from their nickelodeon days in Ohio yet by 1924 had not grown to one-hundredth the size of Famous Players-Lasky. Warners sought a means by which to grow to challenge the dominant triumvirate of Famous Players, Loew's/MGM, and First National. In 1924, the brothers Warner expanded into more expensive feature film production, worldwide distribution, and theater ownership, backed by the Wall Street banking house Goldman Sachs.



6.1 From left to right: Harry Rapf of MGM, Sam Warner, Harry Warner, Jack Warner and Abe Warner.

During this phase of corporate growth, Sam Warner learned of AT&T's inventions. He immediately saw films with sound that would be recordings of popular vaudeville stars. In time he convinced the head of the family, Harry, to approve. Sam convinced Harry to see and hear a demonstration, and soon the four brothers were working up a strategy to use sound to help them build up their company. Deciding not to rock the feature film boat, the company made recordings of vaudeville acts and offered them as novelties to exhibitors along with their feature-length films.

Warner's sales pitch stressed that these so-called vaudeville sound shorts could substitute for the then omnipresent stage shows offered by picture palaces around the country. Thus, the very first "talkers" were short recordings of the acts of top musical, comic, and variety talent then touring the United States. These musical shorts substituted for the shows that first-run theaters offered their customers.

Warner Bros. set in motion its strategy of using these vaudeville shorts to innovate sound films in September 1925. It took a year to work out the bugs, so at the beginning of the next movie season in August 1926 Warner was ready to premiere the marvel it called *Vitaphone*. The studio's public relations experts launched a media splash. Newspapers around the world hailed the latest technological wonder of the 1920s. First-nighters paid up to ten dollars for a seat (equivalent to \$75 three-quarters of a century later). The cream of New York society came to witness operatic favorites sung – on film – by such stars as Metropolitan Opera tenor Giovanni Martinelli. The presentation of the silent film *Don Juan* (1926), with music on a sound track replacing the usual live orchestra, followed.

As Warner Bros. developed more packages (silent feature films with orchestral music on disc plus "vaudeville" shorts), it tested audience preferences. The brothers Warner quickly realized the movie-going public preferred recordings of popular musical acts to those of opera stars. Al Jolson and Elsie Janis, two of the biggest names in the music business during the 1920s, moved to the head of the line to become the first stars of Vitaphone "vaudeville" shorts. Logically and systematically, Warner Bros. inserted vaudeville-style sequences into its feature films.

This set of feature-length films interpolated with Vitaphoned sequences commenced with Al Jolson as *The Jazz Singer*, which premiered in October 1927. Despite this film's fabled reputation, *The Jazz Singer* was not an instant hit. In fact, it was only when the film (plus accompanying Vitaphone shorts) moved outside New York City into the American heartland that the public began to take more than a passing interest. Extended runs in Charlotte, North Carolina, Reading, Pennsylvania, and Baltimore, Maryland – to name three prominent examples – made film industry leaders sit up and take notice. When in April 1928 the New York Roxy booked *The Jazz Singer* for an unprecedented second run and it grossed \$100,000 per week, it seemed only a matter of time before other studios would try Vitaphone.

During those first months of 1928, Warner Bros. had only one true competitor – the Fox Film Corporation. Fox had adapted a version of AT&T's pioneering technology to record sound-on-film. (In the 1930s sound-on-film would become the industry standard.) In 1926 William Fox signed with AT&T to use this technology to improve his company's newsreel business. Like the brothers Warner, William Fox did not believe there was a future for feature-length talkies, but the veteran showman reasoned that the public certainly might prefer newsreels with sound to silent offerings.

William Fox never made a better business decision in his career. Fox Film engineers labored to integrate sound-on-film with accepted silent newsreel techniques. On the final day of April 1927, five months before the opening of *The Jazz Singer*, Fox Film presented its first sound newsreels at the ornate, 5,000-seat Roxy Theater located at the crossroads of the entertainment world on Times Square. Less than a month later, Fox stumbled across the publicity coup of the decade when it showed the only footage *with sound* of the takeoff and triumphant return of aviator Charles Lindbergh.

The enormous popularity of Lindbergh's hop across the Atlantic undoubtedly contributed handily to Fox's success with sound newsreels. Fox newsreel cameramen soon spread to all parts of the globe in search of stories "with a voice." Theater owners queued up to have their houses wired simply to be able to show Fox Movietone newsreels. To movie fans of the day, Movietone News offered as big an attraction as any movie star.

The other major movie companies, led by Paramount, did not want to be left behind. For more than a year, a committee of experts from Paramount, MGM, First National, and United Artists met secretly to study their options. They examined AT&T's sound-on-film technology, were wooed by rival the Radio Corporation of America [hereafter RCA], and drew up plans to anticipate all the problems they thought they might encounter. After nearly six months of haggling over terms, early in May 1928 the aforementioned movie companies signed with AT&T. Once this collective decision had been made, the rush to produce and sell talkies began in earnest.

The widespread adoption of sound – its diffusion – took place within a remarkably short span. The major Hollywood companies had too much at stake to procrastinate. On the corporate level, the planning committee had done its work so well that industry chieftains were surprised at how few unanticipated difficulties arose. Within the framework of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the organization that gives out the Oscars, the major studios cooperated to resolve any remaining problems as quickly as possible. The big studios continued to prosper; smaller producers could not afford the new cost, and were either taken over by larger concerns or simply went out of business.

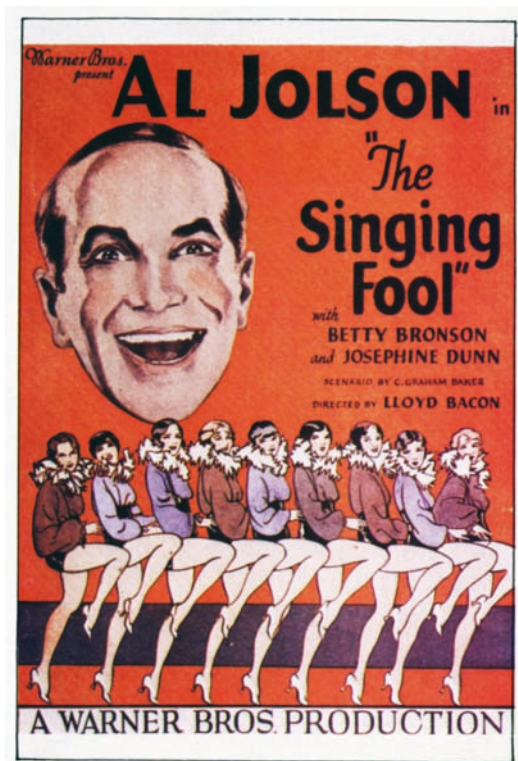
The diffusion of films with sound proceeded quickly. First, at the beginning of the 1928 movie season that September of 1928, Paramount, MGM and the other major studios came out with "scored features." That is, they simply added recorded musical tracks to silent films already in the can as was the case with Warner's

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Don Juan. Movie house owners immediately let go resident orchestras, freeing up funds to help pay for the necessary wiring. Musicians' unions protested, yet because of talkies by 1930 only a handful of theaters in the largest cities in the USA still maintained a house orchestra and organist.

By January 1929, a little over six months after Paramount, MGM, First National, and United Artists had signed their original contracts with AT&T, the majors began to show 100 percent talkies. In September 1928 Warner Bros. led the way with *The Singing Fool* starring Al Jolson. First-nighters paid a record \$11 for tickets to its première. *The Singing Fool* proved such a hit that professional Broadway scalpers departed from custom and brokered blocks of tickets to a movie. Two songs from the film, "Sonny Boy" and "There's a Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," went on to become the first million-selling records of the talkie era. *The Singing Fool* cost only \$200,000, but drew an unprecedented \$5 million. *The Singing Fool* proved to all doubters that talkies were here to stay.

Ten days before the majors even signed with AT&T, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, founded a year earlier, sponsored its first seminar on sound. Less than a month later 20 committees had been established to gather and distribute information, hire experts, and hold seminars. Irving Thalberg, production chief at MGM, supervised these vital coordinating activities. The Hollywood studios went on a building boom, doubling studio space in less than two years. Several companies reopened studios near New York City to accommodate Broadway stage talent unwilling to trek to California. Paramount's Long Island City complex (now home to the American Museum of the Moving Image), a simple commute from Manhattan across the East river, was the largest. Stars such as the Marx Brothers worked at Paramount-East during the day and on Broadway at night.



6.2 Al Jolson in *The Singing Fool*, 1928.



6.3 The Marx Brothers in *The Cocoanuts*, 1929.

Theaters owned by Hollywood companies received their sound installations first; smaller, independently owned houses had to sign up and then wait sometimes more than a year. The major Hollywood companies could hardly keep track of the millions rolling in. Warner Bros. and Fox moved to the top of the industry.

In a rush to compete with AT&T, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) developed its own version of sound-on-film yet could not convince the major Hollywood companies to sign up for its Photophone. To make the best of this situation, RCA founder and President David Sarnoff turned to a friend, financier Joseph P. Kennedy, father of President John F. Kennedy and patriarch of the Kennedy political family. At the time the elder Kennedy owned a small Hollywood studio, the Film Booking Office (FBO). During the last six months of 1928 Sarnoff and Kennedy merged RCA's sound equipment with the FBO studio and added the theaters from the Keith-Albee-Orpheum vaudeville theater empire to create Radio-Keith-Orpheum, another new major Hollywood company. RKO drew its strength from RCA's financial strength and radio talent, FBO's production experience in Hollywood, and a well-located chain of theaters throughout the United States.

The public's infatuation with talkies set off the greatest rush to the box-office in the history of Hollywood movies. At its peak, every person over the age of six in the United States went to the movies on average once a week. Profits for the major Hollywood companies soared. In 1929 merger became the order of the day. Warner Bros. took over First National. A year later, once the dust had cleared, there were five major players in Hollywood – Paramount, Loew's/MGM, Warner Bros., Fox, and RKO – and three minor studios – Columbia, Universal and United Artists. The latter group, unlike their larger cousins, owned no theaters.

The coming of sound had set in place a corporate structure which would define the studio era of the 1930s and 1940s. This offered stability as the eight studios colluded to run a system in the best interest of all. Since the five biggest studios also owned the first-run theaters in the USA, they simply divided up the USA into sections. So, for example, Loew's controlled the biggest city in the USA, New York, and Paramount the second biggest city, Chicago, and Warners the third biggest, Philadelphia.

The coming of sound did not confine itself to the United States. In 1928 Hollywood distributed its films throughout the world, and in many countries Hollywood films filled more than half of the available time on movie screens. Once Hollywood decided to switch to talkies, European theater owners scrambled to wire their theaters and book the latest attractions from America. Seeking to sell sound movie equipment all over the world, AT&T and RCA accommodated foreign producers and exhibitors as quickly as they could. They soon established a world standard of sound-on-film.

HOLLYWOOD'S MAJOR STUDIOS

The coming of sound solidified Hollywood's control over the world market and moved the United States into the studio era in which filmmaking, film distribution, and film exhibition were dominated by five corporations: (1) Paramount, (2) Loew's (parent company for the more famous MGM), (3) Fox Film (later Twentieth Century-Fox), (4) Warner Bros., and (5) RKO. They ruled Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s and operated around the world as fully integrated business enterprises. The Big Five owned the most important movie theaters in the United States. By controlling picture palaces in all of America's downtowns, they took in three-quarters of the average box-office take. Only after they granted their own theaters first-run and soaked up as much of the box-office grosses as possible, did they permit smaller, independently owned theaters to scramble for the remaining bookings, sometimes months, or even years, after a film's premiere.

Paramount

Throughout the 1940s, Paramount represented the most profitable and powerful Hollywood company. In the 1930s Paramount had to struggle to meet oppressive mortgage obligations of its huge theater chain, yet by 1936 quickly regained the economic power it had maintained throughout the 1920s. More than any other member of the Big Five, Paramount relied on its chain of more than 1,000 theaters to maintain its corporate might. Paramount's movie houses held dominion throughout the heartland of the United States from Chicago to New Orleans.



6.4 Barney Balaban.



6.5 Bing Crosby and Bob Hope.

A Chicago theater man, Barney Balaban stood at the top of this corporate colossus. Chicago's Balaban & Katz had merged with Paramount in 1926 and still served as the cornerstone of Paramount's theatrical empire. Balaban ruled with an iron hand, requiring his signature for all significant corporate expenditures, whether for a wig for Bing Crosby or a new popcorn machine for a theater in Omaha. Balaban's conservative corporate strategy made him a darling of Wall Street. Indeed, in 1946 Paramount earned a record 40-million-dollar profit, a figure which would stand unmatched for two decades.

As the Second World War ended, in Hollywood Paramount was the most successful studio in making profits. Its two major stars always ranked #1 or #2 – Bob Hope one year, Bing Crosby the following. Its theaters covered Chicago, then the second largest city in the USA, and all through the Southern USA. It also had an international distribution network second to none and theaters in places like Paris, France. Many think that MGM – and its parent company Loews's, Inc – dominated the studio era, yet looking closely at the economic data across the the 1930s and 1940s it was really Paramount that made the greatest profits.

By the mid-1940s Barney Balaban had formulated a corporate strategy for producing the popular fare to fill Paramount's theaters. It had not always been thus. In the early 1930s, unlike MGM (with Louis B. Mayer), Warner Bros. (with brother Jack), or Twentieth Century-Fox (with Darryl F. Zanuck), Paramount did not have a strong executive in charge of production. Jesse L. Lasky and B. P. Schulberg left in 1932; Emmanuel Cohen, who signed Mae West, left in 1934.

Balaban wanted his own man in California, so he placed Y. Frank Freeman in charge of production from 1937 through the remainder of the studio era. Freeman had been a theater man, and it was his assistants

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who actually ran the day-to-day show. One, Henry Ginsberg, from 1944 through 1950, was able to make a significant impact with his sponsorship of the Crosby–Hope films and the work of Cecil B. DeMille.

Freeman relied on already proven concepts and stars. For example, Paramount plucked its two biggest stars – Bing Crosby and Bob Hope – from radio. We do not vividly associate this duo with the movies, yet by the measure of box-office receipts they represented the height of 1940s Paramount stardom. Their five **Road pictures** of the 1940s all raked in millions. Individually, Crosby also did *Holiday Inn* (1942), *Going My Way* (1944), *The Emperor Waltz* (1948), and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1949). Hope starred in a series of comedies including *My Favorite Blonde* (1942), *My Favorite Brunette* (1947), *Monsieur Beaucaire* (1946), and *Paleface* (1948). From 1944 to 1949 either Crosby or Hope (usually the former) ranked as the top male box-office attraction in the United States in an annual poll of exhibitors.

Road pictures refers to a series of musical-comedy-romance-action films with a similar plot produced by Paramount starring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and Dorothy Lamour.



6.6 Paramount studio lot.

Other filmmakers helped Barney Balaban drive Paramount toward millions in profits. Director Cecil B. DeMille, for example, created one hit after another. *Union Pacific* (1939), *Northwest Mounted Police* (1940), *The Story of Dr. Wassell* (1943), and *The Unconquered* (1946) were all among the ten most financially successful films of their respective years and poured millions into Paramount's coffers. A DeMille protégé, Mitchell Leisen, directed *I Wanted Wings* in 1941, to tie to the Second World War. The war also boosted the careers of Paramount players William Holden, Ray Milland, and Veronica Lake. The Paramount filmmaker who draws the most praise today is writer-director Preston Sturges with his *The Great McGinty* (1940), *The Lady Eve* (1941), and *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944). These comedies sparkled with wit and represent the best of 1940s Hollywood.



6.7 Shots from *The Lady Eve* (Preston Sturges, 1941).

Like all its fellow members of the Big Five, Paramount offered exhibitors 52 features per year starring such favorites as Fredric March, Barbara Stanwyck, Gary Cooper, and Betty Hutton. In addition, Paramount's newsreels were considered the best in the business, and Popeye the Sailor cartoons added a bit of flair. Bob Hope and Bing Crosby middle-brow musical comedies provided the steady stream of profits, year-in year-out. Paramount CEO Barney Balaban kept his eye directly on the box-office take, and only cared that audiences loved Hope and Crosby comedies.

As a result, Paramount maintained its corporate supremacy with films that were loved by fans of the time – often forgotten today. Indeed, we more recall the studio's fare from its money-losing days of the early 1930s. Although the comedies of Mae West (*I'm No Angel*, 1933 and *Belle of the Nineties*, 1934) and the Marx Brothers (*The Cocoanuts*, 1929 and *Horse Feathers*, 1932) never matched the box-office take of Paramount films of the 1940s, they have left a more lasting aesthetic legacy, as have the films of Marlene Dietrich, the musicals of Maurice Chevalier, and the sparkling comedies of Ernst Lubitsch.

Loew's/MGM

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, with its internationally famous symbol of the roaring Leo the Lion, was surely the most famous of the Hollywood studios of the 1930s. From a purely business perspective, MGM simply functioned as a successful unit within the larger enterprise of Loew's, Inc. A fully integrated movie company, Loew's owned a movie studio, a network for international distribution, and a highly profitable theater chain centered in the five boroughs of New York City. Indeed, Loew's management, led by Nicholas M. Schenck, ran the company as if it were simply a chain of movie houses supplied with MGM's films.



6.8 Nicholas M. Schenck presenting a check to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the Paralysis Fund. From left to right: Nicholas Schenck, President Franklin Roosevelt, and March of Dimes head, Basil O'Connor.

In Culver City, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, MGM had a complete movie factory with 27 sound stages on 168 acres. The epitome of studio facilities, MGM's laboratories could process 150,000 feet of film each day, and its property rooms contained more than 15,000 items to be used in movie after movie. Sound studios in Culver City, Paris, Barcelona, and Rome created tracks for dozens of films (dubbed in more than a dozen languages) that were shipped to all parts of the globe.

Nicholas M. Schenck presided over the Loew's empire from 1927 until 1956. Known as the General, Schenck took over from founder Marcus Loew. A trusted team of assistants, many of whom remained loyal to Schenck for more than 30 years, executed his every order. Louis B. Mayer, head of the Hollywood lot, may have been more famous to the public at large, yet needed to run all but the most trivial decisions past the General in New York. Because of Loew's longtime fiscally conservative business practices, the company was burdened by few costly mortgages during the Great Depression, and thus never lost money during that economic calamity. During the early 1930s Loew's/MGM stood at the top of the world's movie business.

MGM's method of film production reflected Schenck's conservative business philosophy. During the 1930s the studio publicized only top drawer feature films. Other films that Loew's distributed were pick-ups, principally from the Hal Roach Studio (short subjects), and Hearst Enterprises (newsreels). Only after the Great Depression had run its course did Loew's feel bold enough to permanently ally with these operations.

For its feature film productions, MGM publicly projected an image as the Tiffany of studios: a high-class, elegant operation. Through the 1930s Greta Garbo and Norma Scherer headlined in a series of high-gloss, sophisticated melodramas, guaranteed to improve the studio's image among those who scorned the movies. Schenck, sitting in his office atop the Loew's State building in the heart of Times Square, covered all bets. He had his studio make a wide variety of feature films, many of which we would hardly classify as high-class.

In fact, in MGM's best years of the early 1930s, the studio's star who most often was ranked highest in popularity polls was none other than 61-year old, gruff Marie Dressler. Dressler played older women with a heart of gold in *Min and Bill* (1930) and *Tugboat Annie* (1933), two hits of the period. That she reached the peak of her stardom at MGM with inelegant movie roles did not matter to Schenck. He liked the money which continuously flowed in at the box-office.

During the 1930s MGM presented jungle adventures (the *Tarzan* series), slapstick comedies (Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in *Sons of the Desert*, 1933), and the satire and burlesque of the Marx Brothers (*A Night at the Opera*, 1935, and *A Day at the Races*, 1937). Year-in, year-out, through the two decades of the Golden Age of Hollywood, Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy were MGM's most long-lived stars, two rugged actors whose roles came to define the ideal male.



6.9 Marie Dressler, 1932.

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During the 1940s, MGM became closely associated with a certain brand of Technicolor musical. *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) with Judy Garland and directed by her husband Vincente Minnelli, *Easter Parade* (1948) with Garland and Fred Astaire, and the innovative *On the Town* (1949) starring Gene Kelly and co-directed by Kelly and Stanley Donen are engaging films that attracted large audiences. Perhaps more than any other genre, the Hollywood musical relies upon a collaborative production system: performers, composers, lyricists, set designers, and choreographers are needed as well as a director, screenwriter, cinematographer, editor, and producer.

In MGM's case, Arthur Freed, former composer and lyricist, produced a number of the best musicals of the late 1940s and early 1950s. He was able to integrate the talents of directors Vincente Minnelli, Stanley Donen, and Gene Kelly; performers Kelly, Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, and Frank Sinatra as the studio era drew to a close. These were Technicolor specials and quite popular with audiences around the world. But Nicholas Schenck was not a risk lover and he would only approve one or two Technicolor musicals per year. He only agreed to distribute *Gone with the Wind* – the best selling novel of the 1930s that would be turned into a hit movie – because David O. Selznick begged him.

MGM made millions with low-budget “B” *Dr. Kildare* and *Hardy* family series. *Our Gang* comedy shorts made millions for Loew's in the 1930s. In the 1940s the studio developed the popular *Tom and Jerry* cartoon series. MGM did not create its own newsreels. Rather, it developed a long-term relationship with the newspaper organization of William Randolph Hearst, which had a worldwide network

of reporters and camera operators to film shots that the competition did not have. This variety was the basis of MGM's success rather than the fabled “more stars than in heaven” reputation.



6.10 Shots from *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944).

Twentieth Century-Fox

In the hierarchy of studio power in the 1930s and 1940s, Twentieth Century-Fox ranked third in profits after Paramount and Loew's/MGM. Although the Great Depression did not prove kind to the fortunes of Fox Film, after it merged with Twentieth Century Pictures in 1935 the new amalgamation prospered. Founder William Fox was out, replaced by new managers and part-owners, Darryl F. Zanuck and Joseph M. Schenck (in Los Angeles) and during the 1940s Spyros Skouras (in New York). Zanuck, Schenck, and Skouras resurrected the company.

Studio boss Darryl F. Zanuck surely earned more public notoriety than Schenck or Skouras. At Warners, Zanuck had become a top production executive, yet he could never hope to move beyond Jack Warner to head the studio. In 1933 Zanuck left Warner Bros. to form (with Joseph M. Schenck) Twentieth Century Pictures, an independent production company. Zanuck proved an authoritative studio boss, one prone to public excesses. Frequently at premières and other public gatherings he was heard bellowing to sycophants: "Don't say yes until I've finished talking!"

However, Zanuck knew enough to stay in the good graces of his senior partner Joseph M. Schenck. In the film business Schenck possessed far more clout. Joseph M. Schenck's younger brother Nicholas had supplied the needed finances to complete the merger of the tiny Twentieth Century Pictures and the ailing Fox Film. The Schenck brothers worked closely together to make sure Twentieth Century-Fox and Loew's/MGM continually ranked at or near the top of the American movie business.

Analyzing the filmmaking strategy at Fox during the 1930s and 1940s is a straightforward task, since there were only two heads of production: Winfield Sheehan until 1935, and Darryl F. Zanuck thereafter. Sheehan had organized the Fox Film studio in 1914, and his rare successes in the early 1930s came with features starring Shirley Temple and Will Rogers. Indeed by 1935 the adorable child actress and the vaudeville veteran from Oklahoma stood atop the annual polls of star popularity taken by movie exhibitors.

Zanuck took over as production chief during the summer of 1935 and supervised Twentieth Century-Fox's studio production well into the 1950s. He quickly developed new stars. The first seems like an unusual choice, yet in her day, ice skating champion Sonja Henie was a movie queen. Her first feature, *One in a Million* (1936), was a smash, and during her salad days of the late 1930s Henie reliably drew in millions at the box-office for her employer. Zanuck imported two more stars from the Broadway stage. Alice Faye had been struggling in New York but became a crowd favorite at Fox with her portraits of the girl-next-door in both musicals and dramas. Tyrone Power is the best remembered of Zanuck's early stars. Through films such as *In Old Chicago* (1938) and *Suez* (1938), Power moved to the top rank of studio players and remained there except for a stint in the Marine Corps during World War II.

Zanuck brought Twentieth Century-Fox its greatest prosperity during the 1940s with Technicolor musicals starring Betty Grable. He established a durable formula during the 1940s when Grable ranked as Hollywood's top female star. Movie-goers seemed unable to get enough of this blonde woman who by her own admission was a marginal singer and dancer. Starring in *Moon Over Miami* (1941), *Song of the Islands* (1942), *Coney Island* (1943), *The Dolly Sisters* (1946), *Mother Wore Tights* (1947), and *When My*



6.11 Shirley Temple in *Baby Take a Bow* (Harry Lachman, 1934).

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Baby Smiles at Me (1948), Betty Grable made her studio more money than any single other performer of the studio era. Critics hailed Zanuck's serious films (such as *Gentlemen's Agreement*, 1947 and *Pinky*, 1949); studio Fox chieftains Joseph Schenck and Spyros Skouras much preferred Grable musicals.

While *Gone with the Wind* (David O. Selznick produced; distributed by Loew's/MGM) offered the most famous film of its time in Technicolor, it was Betty Grable musicals that made Technicolor so successful. During the 1930s and 1940s the Technicolor company was a monopolist. A studio paid for a license from Technicolor, Inc. and then rented the equipment and agreed that Technicolor process the film. Thus through the studio era, Technicolor exploited the major studios during the 1930s and 1940s to create films in the Technicolor process.

Throughout the Studio Era Twentieth Century-Fox also produced low-budget or "B" films. During the 1930s *Charlie Chan* was probably Fox's best-loved series. Exhibitors also clamored for Fox's newsreels. Indeed, Fox's "March of Time" quasi-documentary series became an icon of the era, with its exposés inspired by *Time* magazine and the booming voice of narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis. Traditional Movietone News also stood at the top of its field. Announcer Lowell Thomas became a household name, and newsreel filmmakers in 51 countries (reporting to nine editing centers around the globe) dug up scoop after scoop. Many times Twentieth Century-Fox was able to sell a theater its features simply on the strength of the drawing power of Movietone newsreels.

Warner Bros.

Warner Bros. (always abbreviated unless referring to the four men themselves) was the only true family-run operation among the major movie studios. Eldest brother Harry was the President, middle brother Abe supervised distribution, and the "baby," Jack, headed the studio in California. (Sam died in 1927.) The family struggled to make money and succeeded only as a result of their innovation of sound, and then later shared in the prosperity of the era of the Second World War.

Historians celebrate Warner Bros. for its social exposé films (*I Was a Fugitive on the Chain Gang*, 1932 and *Wild Boys of the Road*, 1933), innovative gangster films (*Public Enemy*, 1931 and *The Secret Six*, 1931), and backstage musicals (*The Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Footlight Parade*, 1933). From a box-office point of view, those films only helped the company lose more than 30 million dollars during the Great Depression.

Once the US economy recovered, steady profits came from such Warners' films as the Bette Davis and James Cagney comedy *The Bride Came C.O.D.* (1941); the romantic *Christmas in Connecticut* (1945) starring Barbara Stanwyck and Dennis Morgan; the film biography of Cole Porter, *Night and Day* (1945), starring Cary Grant and Alexis Smith; the Broadway hit *Life With Father* (1947), starring Irene Dunne and



6.12 James Cagney sings and dances in *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933).

THE COMING OF SOUND AND THE STUDIO SYSTEM

William Powell; and Jane Wyman's Oscar-winning performance in *Johnny Belinda* (1948). Mainstream feature films like these propelled Warner Bros. to such profits and power that when the Studio Era drew to a close in 1949 Warners ranked behind only Paramount and Twentieth Century-Fox.

Yet, in good times or bad, the fundamental principle of Warner's California studio remained the same: cut-rate movie making. Notoriously tightfisted elder brother Harry operated on a volume basis, seeking a small profit on all films, not a big score on several blockbusters each year. Warners was not simply a conservative clone of Paramount or Loew's. For example, Harry Warner was among a handful of business executives to call for intervention by the United States into what would become the Second World War. He also enthusiastically supported **Franklin D. Roosevelt**. Harry Warner and his family were no wild-eyed radicals, rather strongly patriotic pragmatic businessmen who did not have to answer to stockholders.

Harry Warner embraced the profits which came from genre films. Backstage musicals included *42nd Street* (1933) starring Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler, and *Wonder Bar* (1934) starring Al Jolson and Kay Francis. Top-selling novels inspired *Oil for the Lamps of China* (1935) and *Anthony Adverse* (1936); Errol Flynn played a swashbuckling romantic hero in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936). The studio earned a measure of prestige (and a rare Oscar) for its biopics: *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1936) and *Juarez* (1939), both starring Paul Muni. The Second World War inspired the combat films *Air Force* (1943) and *Destination Tokyo* (1944), both tops at the box-office. Postwar US film-goers seemed to enjoy Warners' fatalistic *film noir* creations as typified by *Mildred Pierce* (1945) and *White Heat* (1949).

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945) was American president from 1933 until 1945. His economic recovery program the New Deal (1933) brought hope to the American people and stimulated economic recovery.



6.13 Warner star Bette Davis in *Marked Woman* (Lloyd Bacon, 1937).

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Indeed, Warners did its best in terms of profit during the Second World War and after. The brothers Warner began to see long-term stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, George Raft, Olivia de Havilland and Ann Sheridan get better scripts and make, for example, the most popular film of 1943, *Casablanca*. When de Havilland complained publically that she felt exploited because she had to work for \$1,500 per week, Harry Warner could only shake his head in bewilderment. That was more than most of his customers made in a year. Yet the mild-seeming female star sued Warners and in the long run escaped her Warners' contract. She then went off on her own as an independent – represented by an agent – and worked for different studios that bid for her services.



6.14 Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1943).

More than Paramount, MGM or Fox, Warners milked profits from its “B” unit under Bryan Foy. Warner stars such as Humphrey Bogart learned their craft under Foy whose biggest money makers were the *Nancy Drew* detective films. Warner Bros. did not have to take a back seat to any Hollywood company when it came to short subjects. Having innovated sound through vaudeville shorts, it continued recording top talent through the 1930s and 1940s. Most of the big bands of the swing era performed for Warners' Vitaphone cameras.

Animated cartoons proved the company's greatest success in short subjects. Warners' cartoons of the 1940s (starring Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, and Daffy Duck) represented the best. Warners had begun animation in the 1930s but spent that decade trying to “out-Disney” Disney – Disney's *Silly Symphonies* inspired Warners' *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes*. Gradually Tex Avery, Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett, and Frank Tashlin perfected an irreverent visual style, more cutting than Disney's, more topical than MGM's *Tom and Jerry* or Paramount's *Popeye the Sailor*. Warner Bros.' animated short subjects embraced the patriotic fever of the Second World War more than any other part of Hollywood, and as such probably offering more direct social commentary than any single feature of the era.

Radio-Keith-Orpheum

Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO) had the shortest, least profitable life of any major studio. RKO was formed so that RCA could market its sound equipment, Joseph P. Kennedy could sell his FBO studio for a big profit, and the Keith-Albee-Orpheum vaudeville theaters could be converted into movie houses. In the first two years (1929 and 1930) of its existence, RKO reached an artificial peak. It had success with stars Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in a series of musicals. By the late 1930s RKO struggled along; it ranked as a major studio only because of its nationwide theater chain.

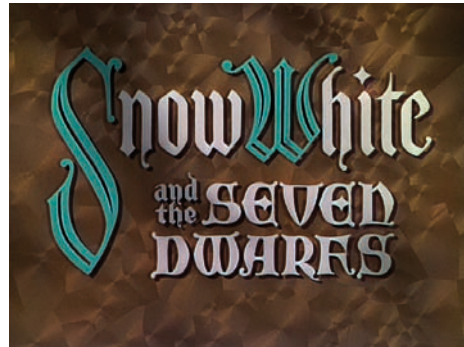
RKO produced the best and worst feature films because its owners and managers were always under the gun to find a way to make money. Rarely was a management team in place for more than a few years when it was let go and replaced by studio bosses with different ideas. Production executives came and went with regularity. David O. Selznick's tenure at the helm lasted from 1932 to 1933 and saw the creation of *King Kong* (1933), *What Price Hollywood?* (1932), and *Bill of Divorcement* (1932). He brought Katharine Hepburn

to RKO for her Oscar-winning performance in *Morning Glory* (1933). Selznick was soon fired, replaced by the creator of *King Kong*, Meriam C. Cooper, who lasted 16 months. Cooper lasted long enough to initiate the Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers musicals, among RKO's greatest contributions to the Hollywood business and film history. Their films were among the most popular and profitable of the 1930s.

When George Schaefer came on as head of production in 1938, he brought to RKO noted figures from Broadway to produce prestige films to make RKO the next MGM. For example, Max Gordon and Harry Goetz re-created their stage hit *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) for RKO, and Orson Welles and his Mercury Company journeyed west to fashion *Citizen Kane* (1941). Unfortunately *Citizen Kane* was a public relations nightmare, and Welles' contract was terminated following his next film, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942). Schaefer's top maneuver was to sign independent producer Sam Goldwyn to distribute through RKO. That is how the studio managed to latch on to the box-office powerhouse (and now critically revered film) *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946).

Schaefer was gone by 1942, and Charles Koerner, his successor, immediately abandoned prestige fare for the cheaply done, predictably profitable "B" films. His first big hit was *Hitler's Children* (1943), an anti-Nazi melodrama which cost \$200,000 to make and grossed more than \$3 million. Not all the "B" features were created by second-rate talents. The many films produced by the Val Lewton horror unit, Jean Renoir's *This Land Is Mine* (1943), and Robert Siodmak's *The Spiral Staircase* (1946) all were made during Koerner's tenure. Koerner died in 1946 and Howard Hughes moved in to create his special brand of corporate chaos – whereby RKO became a toy for this billionaire. He simply wanted one last fling in the movie business before he sold the various parts of the company.

RKO offered exhibitors the usual assortment of shorts subjects. Its Pathé newsreels never matched Fox's Movietone News, yet they were consistent, solid attractions. The crown jewel of RKO's shorts came from the animation it distributed for Walt Disney from 1937 to 1954. (Before that Disney used United Artists.) The feature-length *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* proved an unexpected hit in 1938. Then Disney poured too much money into *Pinocchio* (1940) and *Fantasia* (1940), and although they did well at the box-office, little actual profit was made. Unlike the competition, Disney did not prosper during World War II, relying on government contracts to keep the studio afloat. In the 1950s when Disney made it big in television and theme parks, RKO was well on its way out of the movie business.



6.15 Shots from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Walt Disney, 1938). A reference to the written fairy tale (2). Snow White singing to the birds while scrubbing (3).

HOLLYWOOD'S MINOR STUDIOS

Universal Pictures, Columbia Pictures, and United Artists constituted the Studio Era's Little Three. These corporations could never match the economic muscle of the Big Five because they did not own theaters. They had to depend on the good graces of the Big Five studio theater owners. This cooperation usually came because Paramount, Loew's, Fox, Warners, and RKO wanted to point to the existence of the "Little Three" so as to avoid accusations of monopoly practice.

Even less powerful and more specialized were Monogram and Republic Pictures, only creating and distributing low-budget fare for small town and last run theaters. They survived because most small towns in the USA – populations of 10,000 people or less – had one expensive theater showing Hollywood's best and another showing Republic and Monogram westerns – at lower prices. The Big Five and the Little Three willingly gave over these – the least profitable theaters in the United States – to Republic and Monogram, to demonstrate they were not monopolists.

Universal

Universal Pictures could trace its roots to founder Carl Laemmle's successful fight against the Motion Picture Patents Company. This company would play only a marginal role during the lucrative Studio Era. Indeed, in the 1940s Universal only prospered with low-budget comedies from Abbott and Costello, weekly serials including *Flash Gordon* and *Jungle Jim*, a discount newsreel service, and cheaply made Woody the Woodpecker cartoons. Occasionally during the 1930s and 1940s Universal's management did become ambitious, and sought prestigious works such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) to temporarily challenge the Big Five. But the company never consistently succeeded and fell back again.

German immigrant Carl Laemmle formed Universal in 1912 and opened Universal City Studios in 1915, creating the largest, most modern movie-making operation in the world. While Famous Players-Lasky moved up to number one in the industry by signing top stars and expanding its feature-film budgets, Laemmle maintained a conservative business posture. He continued doing what had worked so well in the past: low-budget formula films. Indeed the studio became famous as a place for developing professionals such as director John Ford and studio executive Irving Thalberg, and then losing them to the more prosperous Fox or MGM.

The Great Depression further battered the already ailing Universal. In 1929 the elder Laemmle appointed his son, Carl Laemmle, Jr., as head of production at the studio. The inexperienced 21-year-old "Junior" Laemmle turned the company from a marginally profitable operation into a gigantic corporate loser. His father stepped in to help, yet by 1936 Junior had done his damage as an inept studio manager. That year his father had to sell the studio to J. Cheever Cowdin's Standard Capital Corporation. Cowdin's management



6.16 Carl Laemmle, pictured with Carl Laemmle Jr.

team had better luck, especially during the prosperous period of the Second World War. After the Second World War, Universal went on the skids again and merged with independent producer International Pictures in 1946. This merger was not successful, and in 1952 Cowdin sold Universal to Decca Records.

Universal's managers – under the Laemmles and the Cowdin regime – survived by having the studio create and distribute low-budget features. Indeed, if one thinks of a successful Universal picture of the studio system era, the image which ought to come to mind is the comedy *Buck Privates* (1941), starring Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Abbott and Costello were the lone Universal stars to ever make it into the annual top ten polls during the 1930s and 1940s.

Universal produced many other types of low-budget films, including horror classics like *Dracula* (1930), *The Mummy* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933), and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935); Deanna Durbin musicals such as *One Hundred Men and a Girl* (1937) and *Mad About Music* (1938); and inspired comedies such as *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* (1941) and *You Can't Cheat an Honest Man* (1939), both starring W. C. Fields. None of these films ever made a great deal of money.

The company did benefit from the general industry prosperity associated with the Second World War and indeed the mid-1940s would prove Universal's apex. After the Second World War ended, it took an independent company – International Pictures – and then Decca records to keep the company afloat. While Universal-International created and distributed some of the most popular *film noir* – *Scarlet Street* (1946), *The Killers* (1946), and *The Naked City* (1948) – in general Universal-International simply lost millions of dollars until in 1952 it sold out to Decca Records music company. Universal would have to wait until the 1960s to prosper.

Columbia

In the 1920s, before the coming of sound, dozens of fly-by-night Hollywood producers attempted to break into the elite circle of the Big Five. Distributing through a loosely knit confederation of independent agents around the United States (collectively known as states rights), independent producers proffered their films to small, independently run neighborhood theaters. Only one of these small Hollywood operators ever made it to the big time. While the rise of Warner Bros. is the greatest success story in Hollywood, almost as important and equally inspiring as a rags-to-riches tale is that of Columbia Pictures.



6.17 Harry Cohn and Frank Capra, 1937.

The image of Columbia during the Studio Era focuses squarely on Harry Cohn, the archetypal, cigar-chomping movie mogul. Cohn is reputed to have claimed that if a certain part of his anatomy twitched with excitement when he previewed a picture, then the American public would love it. If he was not moved, the film invariably would turn out to be a dud. In truth, Harry Cohn was a tough negotiator, a ruthlessly successful businessman. He (along with his brother Jack, who handled distribution from New York City)

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scratched and clawed his way along the hard road through the coming of sound and past the Great Depression into Hollywood prosperity during the 1940s.

Columbia's origins lay in a partnership formed in 1924. Slowly, the brothers Cohn marshaled their forces to create first a national system for distribution, and by 1931, an international one. Columbia had a small studio plant, beginning with two stages on Gower Street in what was then known as Hollywood's "Poverty Row." The Cohns never had the resources to consider buying theaters. During the Great Depression the lack of a theater circuit turned out to be a blessing, since as its larger competitors struggled to pay the mortgages on theaters, Columbia single-mindedly concentrated on making profits from movie production.

Columbia came of age in 1934 with the release of Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night*, starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. Harry Cohn was able to sign these two stars only because MGM and Paramount wanted to "punish" the pair for refusing certain parts and loaned them to this backwater studio. *It Happened One Night* swept the 1934 Academy Awards. But such a coup was not business as usual for Columbia. Typically, during the 1930s, Columbia relied on its low-budget "B" westerns and its even lower-cost shorts, serials, and cartoons for the bulk of its profits. Columbia is too often remembered only for its few high-cost productions, principally the work of Frank Capra including *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Lost Horizon* (1937), and *You Can't Take It with You* (1938), George Stevens' *Penny Serenade* (1941) and *Talk of the Town* (1942), and *The Jolson Story* (1946) and *Jolson Sings Again* (1949).

The efforts of Columbia's "B" western stars – Buck Jones in the 1930s and Gene Autry during the late 1940s – consistently added to the studio's coffers. Columbia's low-budget fare included more than men on horses. Popular characters such as Blondie (based on the perennially favorite comic strip character), Boston Blackie (from a popular radio show), and the Lone Wolf detective (from a successful novel) drew in millions of fans. Serials with continuing stories and characters became a Columbia staple after 1937. *Batman* and *Terry and the Pirates*, both inspired by popular comic characters, were particular favorites.

Columbia's comic short subjects were a mainstay for small, neighborhood theaters. In 1934, the **Three Stooges** launched their first experiment in madness. With scripts that were constantly done and done again; filming that rarely lasted more than a week; and brisk editing and post-production work, films could move from studio to theater in less than a month. As a consequence, Columbia's comedy shorts always made money, even though less than half the theaters in the United States even booked them. Small-town America never seemed to get enough of Curly, Larry, and Moe.

The Three Stooges started out as an American vaudeville act. In the 1930s Larry Fine, Moe Howard, and his brother Curly Howard made many short physical slapstick films for Columbia. Larry and Moe stayed part of the Three Stooges until 1965 when the last film was made.

United Artists

The founders of United Artists – stars Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Charlie Chaplin, and director D. W. Griffith – sought a corporate apparatus for film distribution for their independent productions. United Artists never had a studio per se; rather it distributed features made by filmmakers at their own studios or on rented facilities. United Artists' heyday came during the 1920s when founders Fairbanks, Pickford, and Chaplin actively created films.

Its greatest success during the Studio Era came during an unlikely period – the Great Depression. In the early 1930s Joseph M. Schenck headed company operations; he was a skilled independent producer and had important connections to Loew's theaters through his younger brother Nicholas. In fact, Loew's theaters served as a patron to United Artists during the early 1930s. In 1933 Joe Schenck grew tired of constantly haggling with UA's founders about how to split up the profits he was generating. He found a new partner

(Darryl F. Zanuck), formed an independent production unit (Twentieth Century Pictures), did very well, and then left United Artists for Fox in 1935 to create Twentieth Century-Fox. United Artists was left high and dry.

Throughout the remainder of the Studio Era, Schenck's successors at United Artists struggled to obtain enough films to fill a meaningful distribution schedule. Many notable producers came and went, including Walter Wanger, Alexander Korda, and David O. Selznick. Only Sam Goldwyn created his best work for United Artists, including *Dead End* (1937) and *Wuthering Heights* (1939). Goldwyn did not want to remain the lone contributor to corporate profits and in 1941 moved his independent production unit to RKO. Thereafter United Artists plunged into the red ink and played a minor role in the film industry throughout the 1940s. The company even managed to lose money during the Second World War, when profits in the Hollywood film industry reached record levels.

Monogram and Republic

The Great Depression caused many practices to change in the Hollywood film industry. During the lean times of that economic calamity, independent theaters needed a way to attract away customers from theaters owned by the Big Five. Borrowing techniques from the dime store, neighborhood houses began to regularly offer two films for the price of one – the double feature. Thus these low-priced theaters needed lots of low-budget films. In stepped Monogram and Republic.

Monogram had barely survived the coming of the Great Depression, and new demand for low-cost fare to fill the bottom half of double features came just in time. Keeping production costs at \$20,000 per feature (one-tenth that of an average Paramount film), Monogram executives ground out yearly profits. Monogram produced cheap versions of standard genre fare including westerns (starring Bob Steele and Tex Ritter, among others), the Bowery Boys series, and, during the Second World War, tales of espionage and intrigue.

Monogram made film series of all types – horror films with Boris Karloff, Charlie Chan mysteries, Bowery Boys comedies, Cisco Kid westerns, and Bomba the Jungle Boy adventure films. Sets were used over and over again; scripts re-written for different genres; stars paid minimal wages. The studio motto was speed. No film needed more than a week to be made; and then sent out for worldwide distribution. These were the films George Lucas paid homage to in the first *Star Wars* film.

Monogram's principal rival was Republic Pictures whose founder, Herbert J. Yates, began his career in film processing in 1915. Indeed, his Consolidated Film Laboratories reigned as a major in its field. The Great Depression saw many small producers go under, owing Consolidated, Inc. thousands of dollars in film processing bills. Yates took what remained of these small producers and in 1935 created Republic Pictures.



6.18 Roy Rogers, 1952.

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Republic's output included westerns, serials, and assorted low-budget genre pictures. Singing cowboys (Roy Rogers and Gene Autry) were the studio's dominant stars. In fact, during the Studio Era, the singing cowboy symbolized Republic to movie-goers. Serious filmmakers looked down on this low-brow fare, but in rural USA, few stars had more drawing power than Autry did during the 1930s or Rogers during the 1940s. Indeed, during the Second World War, Republic did so well that profits soared beyond one million dollars per annum, a figure unheard of outside the Big Five. Yates then set out to become "respectable," and produced several prestigious pictures including John Ford's *Rio Grande* (1950), Orson Welles' *Macbeth* (1948), and Frank Borzage's *Moonrise* (1948). Only a handful, in particular John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952), ever made money.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SHOCKS

The corporate hegemony of the Big Five and the Little Three, plus Monogram and Republic, proved a resilient industrial structure. This studio system survived the social upheavals caused by the greatest economic calamity of the twentieth century, the Depression of the 1930s. Indeed, during the 1930s the film industry was one of the nation's most visible economic and social institutions, dominating the field of popular entertainment and thus anti-movie groups formed to blame Hollywood for the ills of the Great Depression. In 1934, the association of the major companies – known as the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, or simply the Hays Office named after its leader Will Hays – established industry self-regulation. Finally, the coming of the Second World War also caused a number of significant changes in the socio-economic fabric of the United States, including the country's return to prosperity. Movie-going increased, reaching its highest rate in the history of the United States.

Although the Great Depression caused social and cultural transformations in all phases of US life, the Hollywood studios endured, although not without upheaval. As Americans had less money to spend, they went to the movies less frequently. Reliable box-office figures from that era do not exist, yet estimates indicate that total take at the box-office fell by approximately 25 percent from 1930 to 1934. To attract patrons and generate more revenues, exhibitors offered more and more double feature shows, gave away dishes and other prizes, and began to sell popcorn and candy.

Movie producers reacted as well. The studios laid off workers and pushed those still under employment to work longer hours for less pay. Memoirs of stars, directors, and other craftspersons who labored for the studios during that era recount anecdote after anecdote of dawn-to-dusk working days, with few breaks off for creative reflection. For example, the Busby Berkeley musicals, projecting innocent and naive fun on the screen to help a nation forget its woes, only emerged from the sweat of regular 14-hour days, six days a week.

In response, workers began to organize, and the unions and guilds so famous later (like the Screen Actors Guild and the Writers Guild) originated and expanded. There were some strikes and work stoppages, yet with the studios holding so much power the workers made only marginal gains. The International Alliance of Stage and Theatrical Employees and Moving Picture Operators (IATSE) easily made the most advancement because of its ability to pull out projectionists and thus close down America's theaters. Hollywood craftspeople posed far less of a threat.

Will Hays ran the association so well that he squeezed the maximum in profits from the studio system. During the early 1930s, through their representative in Washington, DC, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, the major movie companies successfully sought and obtained relief through special bankruptcy laws and lenient anti-trust provisions under the **National Recovery Act**. As a consequence, the

The National Recovery Act was passed in 1933 as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal program. The Act intended to eliminate unfair competitive practices and encouraged the improvement of the standards of labor. It also gave laborers the right to organize in unions.

THE COMING OF SOUND AND THE STUDIO SYSTEM

fly-by-night producers, so common in Hollywood during the 1920s, as well as nearly 5,000 independent movie theaters around the United States, went under. With less competition, the Big Five simply made even more money as the nation dug its way out from the Great Depression.

The growing lure of the movies to America's youth during the 1930s signaled to educators, religious leaders, and social workers the rise of a new social problem. Frustrations due to a lack of economic opportunity were blamed on the evil influences of the movies. Gangster films, they declared, not only entertained, they also inspired and even trained a generation of crooks. Mae West's indulgent attitudes toward fun and frolic, claimed leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, diverted a nation from hard work and Christian attitudes. Conservative religious groups, from the fundamentalist South to Catholic strongholds in the North, pointed to a generation of youth wasting their lives in movie theaters. Women's clubs devoted to improving society asserted that the movies taught the youth of America bad manners, even antisocial behavior.

To counter these criticisms, Hollywood hired apologists to publicize the positive virtues of going-to-the-movies. The few objective social scientists studying the situation found that movie attendance seemed not to fundamentally influence the youth (or adults) of America very much, if at all. Most moral and religious leaders ignored these studies; they *knew*, first-hand, of the harmful effects movies had on the youth of the USA. The more important matter was what to do about this menace.

As economic conditions worsened during the Great Depression, the conservative moral and religious community in the United States took the offensive against Hollywood. Censorship of the movies by various state boards and community panels had existed around the United States since the nickelodeon era. In 1922, Hollywood organized the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association to prevent the creation of a national censorship law. This association was popularly known as the Hays Office after its longtime president, Will Hays, former chairman of the Republican Party. During the 1920s Hays was able to head off all efforts to legally constrain the film industry on the federal level.

In 1930 religious and moral leaders mounted a serious new offensive to significantly restrict Hollywood's subject matter. That year a Catholic Jesuit priest, Daniel Lord, SJ, and a prominent Catholic layman, Martin J. Quigley (who also published the influential trade paper *Motion Picture Herald*), revised and strengthened the Motion Picture Code by which Hollywood was supposed to police itself. Trying to head off trouble, the Hays Office embraced this new set of guidelines, but in practice it did little to enforce them.

In 1933 the Roman Catholic Church, reflecting the growing despair associated with the Great Depression, pushed for mandatory enforcement. Hollywood agreed to submit scripts to the Hays Office and get approval prior to filming. The **Legion of Decency** was formed through which the Roman Catholic Church began to advise its members on what films to avoid; at times it even called for boycotts of theaters to make sure Roman Catholics did not attend certain films. The **National Education Association** led the way to pressure the film industry "to clean up its house."

The **National Education Association** was established in 1847 by teachers to advocate the right to public education for all US citizens and to improve working conditions and salaries. In the 1920s it was mostly made up of teachers who dealt with problems in secondary schools where their students preferred movies to school. By the 1930s the NEA was working with the Hays Office to have films inspired by classic literature shown in high schools. Only later did the NEA cooperate with colleges and universities.

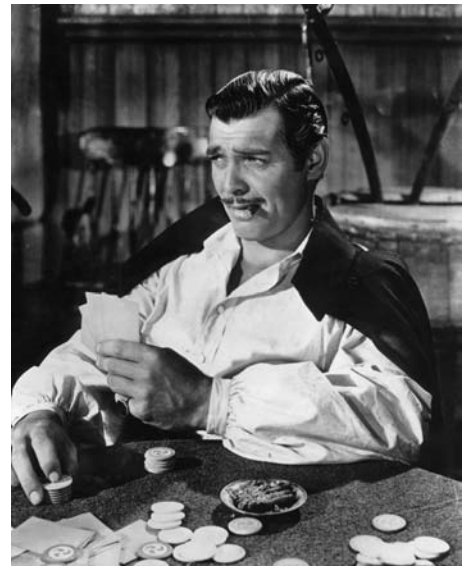
The Legion of Decency was a Catholic anti-film organization that protested against the supposed immoral influences of the movies and was very influential in the 1930s.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

In July 1934 the Hays Office formally established the Production Code Administration. Joseph Breen, a prominent Catholic layman, was placed in charge, and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association agreed that none of its members (specifically the Big Five and the Little Three) would distribute a film unless it had first been approved by the Production Code Administration.

The Production Code forbade scenes which projected a positive image of “crime, wrong-doing, evil, or sin.” Criminals had to be portrayed in an unsympathetic fashion; murders had to be presented so as to discourage imitation and the same for sexual activity. Indeed, David O. Selznick needed a special exception to have Clark Gable say (as Rhett Butler) in *Gone With the Wind*: “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.”

The Production Code had the force of law because the Big Five and Little Three held so much economic power. It was a system of self-regulation policed by its own members. Its goal was not so much to foster good deeds but to create a public relations mechanism to ward off a national censorship law. No federal law was ever passed, and the Production Code ruled as long as the studio era lasted, that is until the early 1950s.



6.19 Clark Gable in *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

Simon Bolivar (1783–1830) was a South American statesman referred to as El Libertador (The Liberator) as he freed the current republics Venezuela (his native country), Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador from Spanish domination.

Benito Juarez (1806–1872) was a Mexican statesman responsible for a new constitution in 1857 that gave equal rights to all Mexicans and separated church and state. Juarez fought European interests that harmed the Mexicans and with the help of the US drove France out of Mexico in 1867.

WORLD WAR II

The Second World War compelled most nations of the world to devote most of their resources to survival. In this atmosphere of restriction, the movies in America prospered as they never had before. The Hollywood corporate hegemony collected back in spades all the losses it had accumulated during the Great Depression. It would take an inflation-bloated era of blockbusters – the 1970s and 1980s – to match these box-office records. In terms of theatrical attendance, per capita records were set in 1945 and 1946 which may never be broken.

At first, the war in Europe hurt the film industry because foreign business declined. As hostilities spread around the world during the late 1930s and into the early 1940s, Hollywood saw overseas box-office revenues plummet. To offset these losses the movie industry focused on South and Central America. The US Department of State’s “Good Neighbor Policy” attempted to promote features with positive Latin



6.20 Hollywood’s big star Betty Grable shot in Technicolor. *Down Argentine Way* (Irving Cummings, 1940).

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American figures. Films with Latin stars and Latin locales flooded American screens. Such eminent leaders as **Benito Juarez** and **Simon Bolivar**; such stars as Carmen Miranda, Desi Arnez, and Cesar Romero; such films as *Weekend in Havana* (1941) and *Down Argentine Way* (1940) became commonplace. The Office of Inter-American Affairs, under Nelson Rockefeller, took the task of the spreading of movie goodwill seriously, supplying technical assistance to the Hollywood studios and paying for promotional trips to film on location such as Orson Welles's visit to Brazil.

In the United States, where no actual combat took place, film fans flocked to the movies in record numbers. As the expanding war economy nearly wiped out unemployment, people had more money to spend. The severe restrictions of a war economy limited production of some goods (like automobiles) and limited the purchase of others (like gasoline for existing cars). New housing and household appliances were simply not available. No real limitations on movie making or movie-going were ever established. The administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt encouraged overworked war employees to see as many movies as possible in their free hours. New movies poured out of Hollywood and attendance records were shattered from Coast to Coast. In cities like Detroit, where auto factories were churning out airplanes and tanks 24 hours a day, movie shows were held around the clock to accommodate workers who worked on evening or morning shifts.

Hollywood made money as never before. The Big Five saw their profits soar into a multimillion-dollar range, totals unmatched since the prosperity of the late 1920s. Male movie stars who were not eligible for the draft worked around the clock. Female stars had greater opportunities than ever before. Independent producers, who had struggled in the 1930s, prospered. No one wanted to admit that war – with all its horror happening outside the USA – was a good thing for Hollywood. Everyone involved hoped that its prosperity would never end.

Indeed, Hollywood had anticipated the coming of war in the late 1930s. Newsreels were the first form to confront the impending global conflict, although generally they glossed over the complex negotiations to present exciting battle scenes. When a fictional film praising the loyalists in the **Spanish civil war**, Walter Wanger's Hollywood film *Blockade*, came out in 1938, there was a storm of protest by anti-Hollywood elements who did not want the film industry to take sides. **Isolationists** accused the film industry of being propagandists for war. *Blockade* proved the exception. Day-to-day features were hardly inflammatory; they concentrated on non-war, non-controversial genre films.

All this changed in December 1941 when the USA entered the Second World War. The question then became, what can Hollywood do to help win the war? An Office of War Information was established by the federal government to serve as a liaison with the film industry. The desirability of making movies was no problem; everybody wanted them. Since young leading men were drafted or volunteered, Hays protested and in February 1942 the selective service director, General Louis Hershey, declared the motion picture industry an "essential industry," which meant that its male employees could apply for deferments as "irreplaceable" workers. Still, most men volunteered; Hollywood was oftentimes left dependent on dogs (Lassie), horses (Flicka), and aging heroes (66-year-old Charles Coburn won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in 1943.)

The other question was how to "help" in the war effort. Thus, studios shipped feature films to the fronts in the Pacific and Europe. Soldiers saw new releases before they were shown in theaters at home. For example, within days of the **capture of Bougainville** in the south Pacific, a tent theater was set up and Hollywood's latest fare was on the screen. The Japanese were still dropping bombs and so while watching the likes of Betty Grable, audience members could hear bombs bursting. Pin-ups decorated the walls of tents and sides of bombers. The famous pose of Grable, her back to the viewer, looking over her shoulder, was known throughout the world. The use of her body set a certain standard for sexuality in the 1940s as

The Spanish civil war (1936–1939) broke out after General Franco overthrew the Spanish republican government. Franco came out as winner with the support of the Spanish bishops and allied German armies. Spain suffered under his dictatorship until his death in 1975.

Isolationist refers to the policy of a country to concentrate on internal affairs. Prior to the Second World War the isolationists were seeking to keep the USA out of the "European War." This was called "America First."

Bougainville, the biggest island of the Solomon chain in the South Pacific Ocean, was occupied by the Japanese in 1942 to harbor airbases. In 1943 US and allied forces attacked to reclaim Bougainville. The Japanese surrendered in 1945.

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it spread the image of the USA during the winning of the Second World War. The Hollywood studio system cooperated with the US military to help “win” the World War II.

Yet the Second World War disrupted distribution around the world. Overseas distribution during the Second World War meant to South and Central America, England, Africa, and Australia. Increased attendance in the USA more than compensated for the missed revenues overseas. And, as the Allies recaptured more territory, Hollywood theatrical distribution soon followed.

At the end of the Second World War the Hollywood film industry was at a peak it would not reach again until the 1970s. Men returned to the USA, sought jobs, and settled their families in suburban USA. One of the key bases of the economic power of the studio system – theater ownership in urban USA – needed to be reconfigured.

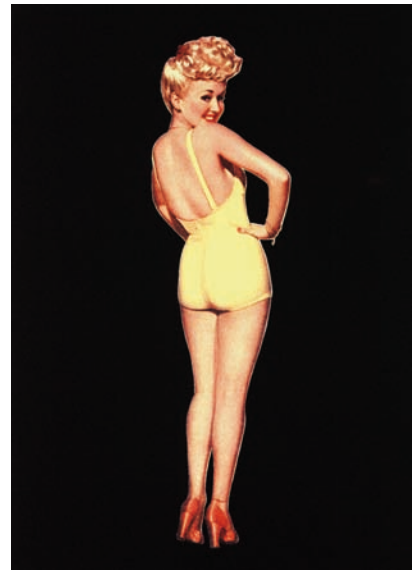
With the war ending came the promise of a rival moving image technology in these new suburban homes – broadcast television. While this took until the 1950s to get started across the whole of the USA, major cities – such as New York and Los Angeles – innovated television before 1950. What would Hollywood do? Make movies for TV? Own TV stations? Own TV networks? All this had to be worked out.

Finally there were the long standing real complaints of independent theater owners. During the 1930s and 1940s, they waited until Hollywood-owned theaters showed new Hollywood films in their first and second run. Only then – months later – did independent theaters gain access to show new Hollywood films. Theater owners complained to their member of Congress who then pressured the US Department of Justice. The so-called Paramount et al (meaning the other majors) suit was initiated in 1938 and then settled in 1948 – against the studios. They had to sell their theaters in cities and shake off all connection to exhibition. How would they handle first-run exhibition in the 1950s?

These three issues defined the end of the studio system era – starting with the coming of sound and ending as simultaneously these issues confronted the industry. While stability defined the Hollywood industry after the coming of sound through the 1930s and 1940s, a new system was needed by 1950. It would take a decade or more to resolve all three. Television did become the main site of film viewing. Studios ceased owning theaters. New companies built drive-in theaters and then indoor cinemas in suburban shopping malls.

From the late 1920s to the early 1950s, the Hollywood studio system was a great economic force, and it spawned a grand era for Hollywood movie making. Each studio created a film a week for distribution. Genres were settled and audiences flocked to movie houses when money permitted. The studio system was a great industrial invention from Hollywood and its leaders assumed it would go on running as a studio system forever. They were wrong.

The products of the Hollywood film industry lived on to remain a powerful cultural force. To make profits, the studio system developed and represented a particular style of movie making. It made the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style the standard by which audiences around the world would judge the success or failure of a motion picture. The following chapter treats the development of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style through the studio system of the 1930s and 1940s.



6.21 Betty Grable, 1944.

CASE STUDY 6

THE COMING OF SOUND TO EUROPE – THE TRIUMPH OF NATIONAL FILM PRODUCTION IN HOLLAND



6.22 Shots from *The Tars* or *De Jantjes* (Jaap Speyer, 1934).

Historians have always been attracted to moments of change. In film history the coming of sound was such a moment as this caused fundamental changes in the production and the exhibition of films. New recording and projection equipment was needed and actors and actresses that spoke with a severe accent were dismissed as dialogue could now be heard. No longer could a film be easily adapted to local languages by simply replacing the inter-titles. In the Netherlands, films were subtitled and as audiences became aware of the foreign languages of the films shown they started to ask for Dutch films.

The Dutch film industry, however, was non-existent. All efforts to build continuous film production had stopped with the dismantling of the Film Factory Hollandia in 1923. But in 1934 the tide seemed to turn with the première of the second Dutch sound film *The Tars* (*De Jantjes*, Jaap Speyer, 1934). *The Tars* was based on the very successful theater play of the same name and featured a lot of songs and dances. The film is a melodramatic story about sailors pressed by the economic crisis who sign a six-year contract to serve in the former Dutch colony Indonesia, leaving behind friends, families, and fiancées. *The Tars* was an unprecedented success. It played continuously for seven weeks in The Hague whereas one or at most two weeks was customary.

This box-office hit gave confidence to other producers to make a Dutch movie as well and for a short while domestic film production was booming. Many of these films were very successful. From research done on Dutch cinema programs between 1934 and 1936 it turned out that the Dutch market was dominated by US (52 percent) and German (27 percent) film titles. Only 1.5 percent of the titles available for screening were Dutch. Yet these few Dutch films were very popular with audiences and made up 6 percent of the total screenings. Six out of the top ten of most popular films between 1934 and 1936 were Dutch.

In economic terms, the Dutch film industry was insignificant and never threatened Hollywood or any other big film industry. For a cultural historian, however, these numbers are significant as they tell something about the preferences of Dutch audiences. They correct the idea expressed by many contemporaneous critics that Dutch films did not matter and were not worth the trouble reviewing. Dutch audiences in the 1930s thought differently and flocked to see the latest Dutch movie.

Not all Dutch films were as profitable as *The Tars* in the small Dutch market (only 8.5 million inhabitants) and a film had to be a hit to recoup its costs. The short blossoming of Dutch film ended with the outbreak of the Second World War as the nation was occupied by the Germans.

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CHAPTER 7

THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE OF HOLLYWOOD MOVIE MAKING

Introduction

Adapting the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style for sound

Genres and stars

The musical

The gangster film

Horror films

The western

Comedies

The war film

Film noir

Science fiction films

Auteurs

Producers

The Hollywood crafts

Directors

Short subjects: Newsreels and cartoons

The coming of color

Ending the first Golden Age

*Case study 7: How was the moviegoer affected by the movies?
Reconstructing the meaning of movies and movie-going with the help of oral history*

INTRODUCTION

By 1930 the studios in Hollywood were rapidly turning out Classical Hollywood Narrative Style films with sound. Hollywood studio filmmakers re-crafted the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style to encompass noises, music, and synchronized speaking. Movie makers had placed the character – and her or his voice – at the core of stories told with sounds and images.

Slowly over the next two decades, Hollywood added more complexity to the new movies with action in deep space, new stars and new kinds of stories from gangster movies, and horror films to comedies, and war films.

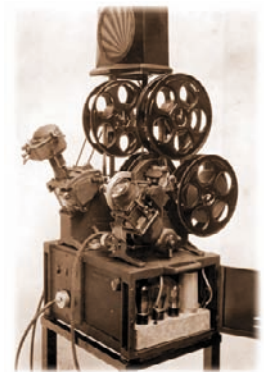
Within this studio era of the 1930s and 1940s, some movie directors were able to craft an individual style within the studio system. Movie directors such as John Ford, Howard Hawks, Frank Capra, Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock (from England), and Fritz Lang (from Germany) offer examples of celebrated movie directors.

This Classical Hollywood Narrative Style – with sound – defined the parameters within which a movie maker could work. He or she had to accept these constraints and then could attempt to fashion complex, interesting motion pictures. Certain Hollywood studio filmmakers (such as directors Frank Capra and Alfred Hitchcock) presented the public with distinctive movies so popular that in time their names went above the title. To film historians these special film authors (or auteurs) of Hollywood's Golden Age represented rare talents who were able to work within the system but still wield enough power to regularly leave a distinctive stamp on the films they made. Through a recognizable, patterned use of editing, camerawork, sound, and mise-en-scène, they defined what critics have praised as a “personal vision” within the highly regulated studio atmosphere of Classical Hollywood Narrative movie production.

During the 1930s and 1940s Hollywood studio movie makers, from producers and directors to prop movers and costume creators, helped create hundreds of popular feature films annually – plus even more short subjects. The Hollywood film industry reached this so-called “Golden Age” by adapting the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style developed during the silent era to sound. Familiar genres – westerns, musicals, gangster films, comedies, horror movies, and war films – employed new stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, and Bette Davis to add the necessary star appeal. After the Second World War ended in 1945, Hollywood took a turn toward darker and more realistic stories – now called *film noir*. Here it became harder to tell the villains from the heroes.

ADAPTING THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE STYLE FOR SOUND

Hollywood filmmakers established the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style during the silent era, and then reworked the formula for the talkies. First the studios had to reorganize to integrate sound into their operations. The new sound-recording technology complicated standard silent techniques. This was tested and retested through the late 1920s and early 1930s. Collectively – through the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences – the studios, and their suppliers Western Electric (a subsidiary of AT&T) and RCA, developed better microphones, cameras with covers (called blimps) to muffle the noise of the film winding through, and studio buildings to eliminate unwanted sounds.



7.1 Moviola editing apparatus.

Advances in editing sound and film were also made. Editing in the silent era simply required a shears, glue, and rewinds; for sound films, an elaborate and expensive apparatus known as a Moviola was required to match and meld sound and image.

The studios for the first time had to hire university-trained engineers to help deal with the problems of sound. Some day-to-day difficulties could be resolved at the studio level. So, for example, MGM technicians developed a flexible microphone boom to record moving camera shots. A prototype boom was built in a studio shop, and once it was perfected, the actual manufacture was farmed out, in this case to Mole-Richardson.

But simple tinkering hardly resolved all problems. Adjustments were required in film stocks, and sound equipment was continually improved to enhance the fidelity of the recording. This could only be done through the resources and staff of multimillion dollar corporations such as Eastman Kodak, RCA, and Western Electric. RCA and Western Electric's Electrical Research Products, Inc. (a subsidiary of AT&T), established throughout the 1930s, worked to perfect directional microphones, increase the frequency range of sound recording, and reduce interference from ambient noise. The Second World War brought technological change to a halt, but after the war came sound recording on magnetic tape, while sound-on-film technology continued to be used for release prints in theaters.

Hollywood never considered abandoning the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style which had worked so well during its glory days of the silent cinema. Instead, methods were sought to insert sound into the existing movie-making process. Metaphorically Hollywood filmmakers equated the camera with the eye, the microphone with the ear. Thus, if the camera (eye) could see into the depth of the space, so the microphone (ear) ought to be able to hear in both the foreground and the background. Boom microphones were innovated early on to allow the microphone as well as the camera to follow action continuously while maintaining the proper distance.

In using sound to help stories, movie makers identified the human voice as the center of action. Sound could add character traits whereas in the silent cinema the director could rely only on body and facial characteristics and movements to establish the psychological states of characters and the changes they underwent. In talkies, modulations of the human voice (as well as noises and music) led to fuller developed characters. For example, directional microphones drew out dialogue in heretofore hard to reach locales, and improved sound equipment enabled voices to be clearly distinguished from noises in the scene.

Music helped with character development as well. By the 1940s passages of music were used most effectively to identify certain characters, connect scenes, and/or to underscore tense action sequences. Leitmotifs (a repeating configuration of notes) connecting music with character had been part of orchestral scores sent out with silent films; talkies formalized this technique. In terms of production, music was added last, in the post-production phase. Properly crafted music polished the narrative highlights and cemented the story together so that audience members (humming as they left the theater) remembered the highlights of the picture, and recommended it to their friends.

With the coming of sound, then, the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style cinema took on aural equivalents of the visual elements which had long been in use. Some devices were eliminated, inter-titles for example, necessitating slightly longer takes to spin out the story. Spoken dialogue also made talkies longer than their silent film predecessors and increased the need for cutting from character to character. The Hollywood cinema of talkies continued to be a cinema of editing: a scene was established and then analyzed through editing to produce the appropriate story values.

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During the late silent era, multiple-camera filming enabled several shots to be made simultaneously and cut together at a later time. For talkies this technique proved too cumbersome, and so Hollywood looked for ways to adapt single camera filming. The blimped camera could be moved on tracks; more flexible cranes enhanced the possibilities of camera movement. The coming of sound led to more movement of the camera, not less.

Once the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was adopted for talkies, Hollywood did not sit still, but innovated technologies it thought would add to profits. New technologies were continually introduced, even though they did not have the “overnight” impact of the coming of sound. For example, deep focus photography came into common use during the 1940s. Film historians have long celebrated the use of deep focus in Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* (1941). In that film Welles – cooperating with cinematographer Gregg Toland – composed with a flair for depth of composition not typically found in films of the 1930s.

Camera operators can adjust for greater depth by manipulating settings and props, camera position and light sources, film stock and film lenses. In deep focus photography, depth is created through a combination of a lens that is smaller than 50mm, fast film stocks, complex optical processes, and particular shutter speeds and openings. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style silent film rules for composition in space were usually straightforward. Actors and actresses performed in one plane of action, two planes at most. The mise-en-scène provided general background reference points, helping to situate the characters in the space of the scene.

Of course, multiple plane spaces were used, but almost exclusively in long shots. Buster Keaton, emphasizing the comic relations of his deadpan character to his surroundings, often composed his long take (in time) shots in extensive and expressive depth in his 1920s comic master works. But his style remained the exception, not the rule. On the whole, the single plane techniques of the 1920s continued to be the norm throughout the 1930s as movie makers struggled to find ways to better use sound.

By the late 1930s sound had been fully incorporated into the Hollywood cinema, and filmmakers were beginning to seek a new visual look by which to differentiate their films. Thus, in 1940 and 1941 a number of movies were released in which deep space was used to emphasize tension, as in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) with its ominous ceilings. But the employment of deep space did not radically disrupt the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style because depth was often focused in the center of the frame, or it was used as a dramatic highlight in an establishing shot, or as part of a mystery or horror film.

Citizen Kane (1941) was not the first film to use deep space in a complex manner. But it certainly did incorporate this stylistic possibility to highlight the story of Charles Foster Kane. Cinematographer Gregg Toland utilized wide angle lenses, fast film stocks, **arc lighting**, and an improved Mitchell camera to create a brand new Hollywood look. Toland had experimented with the elements of deep focus during the 1930s but regularly stuck with the principle of using it only for establishing shots. Toland is justifiably lauded for *Citizen Kane* because he brought fame to the technique and used deep focus to dramatize shots which lasted far longer than was then the Hollywood norm. These static, beautifully composed shots (such as Susan Alexander’s music lesson or Kane signing away his newspapers) were considered stunning sensations in their day, so much so that they were featured in *Life* magazine.

Consider but one famous example: the shot in which Kane’s mother signs over her young son to the banker Walter Parks Thatcher (known to the movie-going public in the USA as J. P. Morgan). As the scene begins Kane as a boy is playing with his sled in the snow. Then the camera pulls back to reveal first a window, then Kane’s mother inside the house, on the left of the frame; finally Thatcher joins her at a table to sign

Arc lighting was one of the earliest forms of supplemental studio electrical lighting that was slowly replaced by incandescent lights – that had longer burning-hours – before the introduction of sound. It was also used for film projection.

the papers. Kane's father stands powerless in mid-distance while the boy, now at the center of the frame, continues to play blissfully in the snow outside. In the distance, throughout the long shot, we see how unaware the young Kane was of the plans being made for his future. To achieve what would have been done in several shots in the traditional Classical Hollywood Narrative Style system, Welles and Toland crafted in one complex unit.



7.2 Shots from *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941). The first gift of the banker guardian – a sled.

Toland had sought out Orson Welles to get the assignment to shoot *Citizen Kane*. He claimed credit for the film's radical look and was labeled a heretic by his fellow cinematographers for it. Yet he deserves less credit than he has normally been given since some of the most famous credited deep focus shots (for example Susan Alexander's attempted suicide) were not done by a cinematographer adjusting the camera, lighting, and lenses, but rather in a special effects laboratory by manipulating the optical printing processes. Toland and other RKO technicians did highlight through *Citizen Kane* the possibilities of a new style of deep space which, through the rest of the 1940s, came to be accepted as yet another option in the package of possibilities of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

During the 1930s the most famous studio – MGM – rarely employed such “experimental” possibilities of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. The “Tarzan” films, the movies starring Greta Garbo or Clark Gable, and the “Andy Hardy” low-budget films offer examples of the most standard visual and audio styles.

For example, Nicholas Schenck brought the 20-year old Greta Garbo to the USA from Sweden in 1925. She made a handful of popular silent films, but her deep Swedish accent created a challenge for sound pictures. Having achieved enormous success as a silent movie star, she did well in the early 1930s as her voice was first heard on screen in Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie* (1930), which was publicized with the slogan “Garbo Talks.” The movie was a huge success. Garbo appeared as the World War I spy *Mata Hari* (1931). She was next part of an all-star cast in *Grand Hotel* (1932) in which she played a Russian ballerina. Her role as the doomed courtesan in *Camille* (1936), directed by George Cukor, would be regarded by Garbo as her finest acting performance. Based on analysis in



7.3 Greta Garbo on the cover of *Motion Picture*.

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the twenty-first century her finest work came in comedy – starring opposite Melvyn Douglas in *Ninotchka* (1939), directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

By 1940, MGM was working on a more all-American image and Nicholas Schenck let her go. The roles she was qualified for required a part for a European. Nonetheless, in the 1930s she was so popular that she was caricatured in the Warner Bros. cartoons *Porky's Road Race*, *Speaking of the Weather* (both 1937 and directed by Frank Tashlin), and *Hollywood Steps Out* (1941, directed by Tex Avery).

Being an economic institution, Hollywood absorbed innovations into its Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. After *Citizen Kane*, deep space was used to add terror in horror films or provide unique establishing shots, but never to stand alone. In Toland's own camerawork for *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), a milder, more restrained, deep space cinematography amplified the story of three returning servicemen, never exaggerating or calling attention to itself. The most famous use of deep space in *The Best Years of Our Lives* is a scene in Butch's tavern when Al (Frederick March) looks from Homer at the piano in the foreground to Fred Derry (Dana Andrews) in the phone booth in the distance breaking off with Al's daughter. This shot served only to establish the scene of the action, and to depict changes in character relationships. Director William Wyler followed this stunning establishing shot with standard Classical Hollywood Narrative Style continuity editing.

Director William Wyler creates an evocative sequence of Fred Derry reliving a combat mission while sitting in the remains of a former bomber, utilizing imaginative “zoom” effects to simulate an aircraft taking off. The wartime combat aircraft that feature prominently in the film were being destroyed in large numbers at the end of hostilities. Former air force bombardier Derry walks among the aircraft ruins, and then climbs into a plane and relives the terror of wartime bombing. This scrap yard full of used aircraft is now providing parts for pre-fabricated housing and, following the story line, Fred gets a job dismantling the used airplanes and then turning them into pre-fabricated houses. Shortly after its premiere at the Astor Theater, New York, in December 1946, Bosley Crowther, film critic for *The New York Times*, hailed the film as a masterpiece, and wrote that seldom there comes a motion picture which can be wholly and enthusiastically endorsed but also praised as superlative entertainment. Crowther singled out screenwriter Robert Sherwood and director William Wyler for their beautiful and inspiring demonstrations of human fortitude. He praised producer Sam Goldwyn's ensemble casting as the best performances in this best film of the year from Hollywood. Here was a popular film that took up the pioneering cinematography of *Citizen Kane*. For the 1947 Academy Awards, *The Best Years of Our Lives* won seven – including best film of 1946.

After the Second World War, a new sense of movie style developed. Even MGM took production out of the studio lot to film on location. For Hollywood, realism meant shooting on



7.4 Shots from *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946). The frustrated ex-flyer (Dana Andrews) walks in moving camera shot – through the junk yard of the very airplanes he flew in the Second World War.

location. Again, however, shooting off the studio lot was absorbed into the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. This was prompted by the fascination with documentaries and newsreels made during the Second World War.

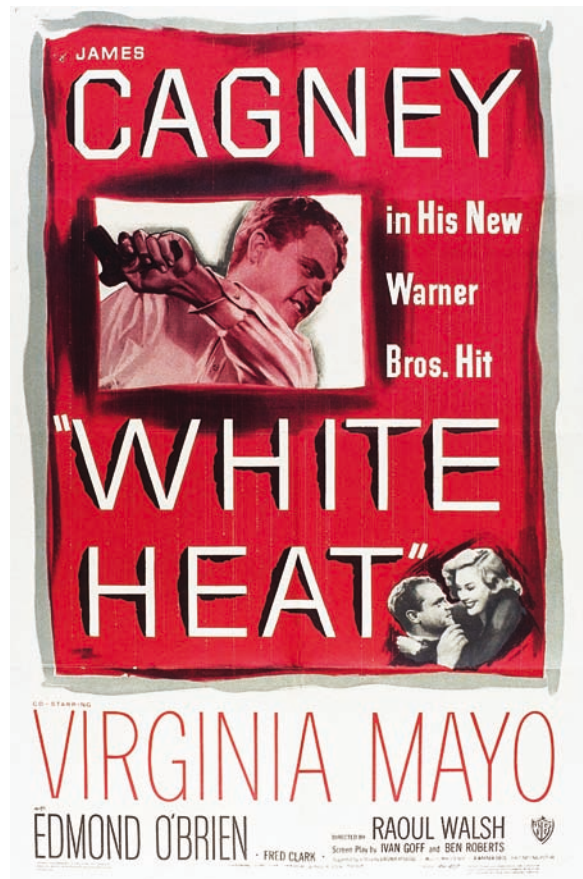
Lighter and smaller cameras – with film that could pick up available light – were developed for newsreels reporting the action of World War II. Returning camera operators began to use these on-location shots. These camera shots looked different than the studio sets of the past. This surge in what Hollywood sold as “realism” had a number of origins, but surely one was the by-then standard practice of deep space photography. Locations seemed more open and spacious when highlighted by deep space photography. The viewer could take in all the action important to the story, not just focus on one plane. Faster stocks also made images look sharper and portable equipment permitted the movie makers to go to a suitable location, not simply rely on sets in sound stages. Yet this thrust toward realism did not change Hollywood story-telling on film. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, with modifications, continued to set the appropriate standard.

GENRES AND STARS

During the 1930s and 1940s the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style added complexity in the use of sound and cinematography, and after World War II shooting on location. However, the types of stories told did change in order to fashion new appeals to film fans throughout the world. Studios employed ever changing types of stories to differentiate one film from another. Gangster movies with James Cagney were quite popular in the early 1930s while detective yarns starring Dick Powell drew in millions of patrons in the 1940s. The Hollywood studios continually worked and reworked familiar stories (such as the western) in order to gain the greatest share of the box-office. Not only did these film genres tell and retell well-known stories, but audiences came to expect familiar situations and endings. Movie-goers who went to see a western expected that the hero would vanquish the villains at the end. If the hero did not, the film might be labeled an anti-western.

Movie genres required that audiences and Hollywood movie makers agree on certain expectations. Some were distinguished by common theme and narrative. For example, the western told of

the heroic actions of pioneers and cowboys who settled the frontier of the United States between 1845 and 1900. Genres dictated specific settings and objects (their look or iconography). For example, a gangster



7.5 James Cagney starring in *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949).

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film of the 1930s required a Chicago-like urban milieu, machine guns, and fast automobiles. Still other genres centered around unusual forms of behavior. In musicals, seemingly ordinary folks went about their business, and then spontaneously broke into song and dance (as Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers or Judy Garland and Gene Kelly regularly did). Movie-goers expected Bob Hope to get into comic trouble while Bing Crosby played Hope's straight-man and also added a song or two.

Stars provided the most common way to differentiate genres. Certain figures became the very icons of a particular formula. James Cagney will always be identified as the gangster, despite numerous other, often distinguished movie roles. Cagney, for example, played western heroes but these did not prove popular. Cagney was only able to break with his gangster stereotyping with musicals such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942).

Frequently a star's persona would change as the public's fascination moved in one direction or another. Joan Crawford played smitten, humble women in the 1930s, and then worked hard to change her image and became the hardened bitter woman in mystery films of the 1940s when she moved to Warner Bros. After she made such award winning films as *Mildred Pierce* (1946) a new star persona was perfected.

It was the job of the studio's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and his studio boss to figure out which stars belonged to which genres. So while Arthur Freed had a unit at MGM and Louis B. Mayer and Dore Schary were the managers of the MGM studio in Culver City, California, all decisions were made in New York City by Loew's CEO Nicholas Schenck. It was the corporate CEO who approved the budgets, star allocations, and genres the studio made each year. Then the manager of the studio – the person far more famous in the eye of the public, such as Louis B. Mayer at Loew's, Inc. subsidiary MGM – made sure that 52 features and 104 short subjects were sent out to Loew's, Inc.'s theaters each year. So understanding Schenck's orders and Mayer's interpretations, Arthur Freed executed his famous musicals – subject to the corporate constraints.

THE MUSICAL

The coming of sound made possible the film musical. Numbers could feature dancing, singing, or both, and could be inserted into any number of stories. Thus, the musical can be defined by its use of flourishes of sound and patterns of human behavior and movement we call dance. The genre began with Al Jolson in Warners' *The Singing Fool* (1928), topping the record box-office grosses until the late 1930s. It gave rise to dozens of sub-genres as studios looked for ways to differentiate their musicals from those of their competitors.

Early talkies borrowed liberally from stage sources for such revues as *King of Jazz* (starring big band leader Paul Whiteman – and guests) and *Paramount on Parade* (directed by, among others, Dorothy Arzner and starring everyone on the lot at the time), both released in 1930. The nineteenth-century operetta inspired Ernst Lubitsch's *The Love Parade* (1929) and *The Merry Widow* (1934), and Rouben Mamoulian's *Love Me Tonight* (1932).

In the early 1930s Warner Bros.' Busby Berkeley, a Broadway veteran, created a musical around backstage stories. Berkeley mounted vast musical numbers for *Footlight Parade* (1933), *Dames* (1934), *42nd Street* (1933), and the "Gold Digger" series (of 1933, 1935, and 1937). Backstage musicals differed from revues and operettas in that they told of struggling performers, often set in The Great Economic Depression of the 1930s USA. Characters had to be tough and brash, not sentimental and romantic. Their musical performances featured new popular songs within extravagant, spectacular dance numbers, often staged in geometric patterns. Berkeley added this latter touch by choreographing dances with a military, mechanical precision.

In the mid-1930s, a new musical form emerged from RKO, a studio which could not afford to match even Warners' cut-rate spectacles. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, from 1934 to 1939, created one delight

after another: *The Gay Divorcee* (1934), *Top Hat* (1935), *Follow the Fleet* (1936), *Swing Time* (1936), and *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* (1939), among others. RKO did not completely abandon the backstage story. Invariably Fred Astaire played a sometimes successful, sometimes out-of-luck performer who somehow always wound up wooing the Ginger Rogers character. The beauty of the Astaire–Rogers form of the musical came from the complex, fanciful integration of song and dance Astaire used to romance Rogers. The plot saw the Astaire character almost lose the Rogers character, but then they would be reunited at the end, often



7.6 *Follow the Fleet* (Mark Sandrich, 1936).

after a modest (compared to Berkeley's finales) but yet spectacular production number. Fred Astaire and Hermes Pan designed the dances in these films, and in their day they were considered great popular talents. A half century later Astaire is ranked among the greatest dancers – ever.

Film historian John Sedgwick has demonstrated that between 1934 and 1936 Hollywood's top grossing stars were Astaire and Rogers. They generated the highest box-office takes as published in *Variety*, the daily and weekly newspaper of the movie business. The Astaire and Rogers' musicals took the first crucial step toward a musical form in which the song, dance, and story were fully integrated. This type of musical, often filmed in Technicolor, reached its peak in the years just after the Second World War at MGM. However, other studios' musicals were often more successful at the box-office. Indeed, the most popular musical stars of the day were Betty Grable at Twentieth Century-Fox and Bing Crosby at Paramount. The Arthur Freed unit at MGM gave fans *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), starring Judy Garland, and directed by Vincente Minnelli. This was an integrated narrative with musical numbers advancing the story line.

As influenced by the stage musical, *Oklahoma!* (1943) producer Arthur Freed brought together talents such as Minnelli and Garland and Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen to help create MGM's most noted musicals. From the first, Freed permitted Kelly to do his own choreography and then later to co-direct (with Donen) *Singing in the Rain* (1952). Garland created one hit song after another. But most importantly Freed was committed to original, integrated film musicals, developed in Hollywood by his in-house talent, matched with the regular output of remaking Broadway hits. During the final years of the studio era great musicals emerged from the Freed unit: *The Pirate* (directed by Vincente Minnelli, starring Gene Kelly and Judy Garland, 1948), *On the Town* (directed by Stanley Donen, starring Kelly and Vera Ellen, 1949), *Singing in the Rain* (1952), and *The Band Wagon* (directed by Minnelli, starring Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse, 1953).

THE GANGSTER FILM

During the early 1930s Hollywood turned out a new form of crime melodrama, the gangster film. The films in this genre depicted the rise and fall of a gangland figure associated in the public's mind with, and inspired by, the notorious career of the 1920s Prohibition era Chicago boss, Al Capone. In 1919 in the USA it became illegal to purchase and drink any type of alcoholic beverage. Gangsters took over providing the public with beer and made millions of dollars. Warner Bros., taking its stories from contemporary newspaper headlines, opened this cycle with *Little Caesar* (starring Edward G. Robinson, 1930). The basic narrative was then retold to the delight of movie audiences in *The Public Enemy* (starring James Cagney, 1931).

In 1919 the Volstead Act forbade the buying and selling of alcohol in the USA. This led to massive illegal alcohol production and consumption and in 1931 the policy was officially declared to have failed. In 1933 the Prohibition Act was abolished. Al Capone (1899–1949) was an American gangster stationed in Chicago, infamous for his ruthless actions. His illegal businesses prospered during the Prohibition era.

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Horatio Alger (1832–1899) was an American novelist who wrote more than a hundred books, most of which share the rags to riches moral. His career took off in 1868 with the huge success of *Ragged Dick*.

From these box-office hits the fundamental elements of the genre were established. The large US city (by implication Chicago) provided the milieu for the rise of the gangster-hero. In an inversion of the traditional rags-to-riches **Horatio Alger** fable the central figure begins life as a poor boy from the slums but rejects the straight and narrow for a career of crime. As he makes his fortune, conflicts arise when rival gangs try to protect their territories. (The intra-gang warfare featured the marvels of modern technology, from machine guns to high speed autos, to sophisticated communication devices.) But when the gangster reaches the crest of his new power, he becomes lackadaisical and slothful, and a new poor boy arrives to kill him and begin a new ascent.

Not all sectors of US society applauded these exciting tales of lawlessness and violence. Moral and religious leaders condemned what they saw as the glorification of a hoodlum hero. They insisted that, whatever else transpired during the film, the gangster-hero die at the end. The Production Code of 1934 wrote in such a required ending. In 1935 Hollywood turned to a narrative approved by the “forces of good” in which the FBI was the protagonist. *G-Men* (1935) was iconographically indistinguishable from the classic gangster efforts except that the FBI now brought law and order to the city.

The gangster cycle was reworked in yet another permutation during the late 1930s. In the original efforts, the gangster was born a lawbreaker. Few thought about the implications of his environment and social milieu. Society’s only choice was to eradicate this menace. Reform was not an option. But during the late 1930s Hollywood introduced the gangster-hero as the victim of a poor, underprivileged social environment. The gangster in *Crime School* (1938) and *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) was represented as a product of the slums of US cities. He was not simply born a criminal; he was the outgrowth of the failure of society to deal with the lack of low income housing, poverty, and ineffective schools. This also was a way to deal with groups who attacked movies for being too violent.

John Huston’s *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) continued the iconography of the city milieu and re-used the gangster villain, but replaced the gangster-hero with the private eye. This hard-boiled detective, working alone, operated between the world of the police on one side and the world of warring gangs on the other. Isolated, he had to navigate an almost demonical hellish city, often overwhelmed by the multitude of evils of urban USA. But he always triumphed, to move onto another case.

After the Second World War, hard boiled detective films continued to be popular. Directors, seeking a new look, began to film on location. For example, the new interest in outdoor, location shooting was applied to a genre staple in *The House on 92nd Street* (1945) which told of an FBI investigation of a German spy-ring in the United States. Moreover, the genre began to investigate itself; that is it became self-reflexive.

For example, in *White Heat* (1949), Cody Jarrett (played by James Cagney) the gangster-hero is an Oedipal figure, not victimized by a slum environment, but rather crippled by a mental condition. *White Heat* was directed by Raoul Walsh for Warners, starring James Cagney, Virginia Mayo, and Edmond O’Brien with Warners-style music by Max Steiner and released in September 1949. Cody Jarrett is the ruthless, deranged leader of a criminal gang. Although married to Verna (Virginia Mayo), Jarrett is overly attached to his equally crooked and determined mother, “Ma” Jarrett (Margaret Wycherly), his only real confidante. When he has one of his splitting headaches, she consoles him, sits him on her lap, and gives him a whiskey with the toast, “Top of the world.” It is revealed that Jarrett’s father died in an insane asylum.

Jarrett and his gang rob a train, resulting in the deaths of four members of the train crew and one of Jarrett’s accomplices, Zuckie (Ford Rainey). With the help of informants, the police soon close in, and Jarrett shoots and injures US Treasury investigator Philip Evans (John Archer). Jarrett then confesses to a lesser

crime, which was committed by an associate at the same time as the train robbery. While this provides Jarrett with an alibi, he is still sentenced to three years in prison. While incarcerated, he learns his former partner has killed his beloved mother. Jarrett escapes, and confronts and kills his former partner as revenge for murdering his mother. After a botched robbery of a chemical plant, police surround the building and call on Jarrett to surrender. Jarrett decides to fight it out and flees to the top of a gigantic gas storage tank. When the police shoot Jarrett several times, Jarrett starts firing into the tank to explode the whole tank farm and shouts, “Made it, Ma! Top of the world!” – just before the plant – and he – go up in a massive explosion.

We can look back with perspective and realize that *White Heat* inspired heist films of the early 1950s (for example John Huston’s 1950 *The Asphalt Jungle* and Stanley Kubrick’s 1956 *The Killing*), accentuated the semi-documentary style of films of the period (the 1948 *The Naked City*), and contained dappled black-and-white cinematography, and a femme fatale character, later labeled traits of film noir.

HORROR FILMS

In February 1931, a struggling Universal Pictures released *Dracula*. A Broadway stage production of the Bram Stoker novel of a blood sucking count had been mounted on Broadway in 1927, starring Bela Lugosi, and despite unfavorable reviews ran for a year in New York and two years on tour. Universal used the same star and veteran director Tod Browning to create the studio’s top grossing film of 1931. As a result, the invasion of the normal world by the supernatural was off and running as a popular genre of the 1930s.

Universal followed with a version of the Mary Shelley tale, *Frankenstein* (1931), starring Boris Karloff as the monster. This film established the icons of the mad scientist, the out-of-control monster, and the dangerous, murky foreign setting, usually lacking daylight. After the twin successes of *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dracula* (1931), the floodgates opened for more horror films. Paramount released *Island of Lost Souls* (with Charles Laughton and Lugosi, 1932) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (starring Fredric March, 1931); Warner Bros. issued *Dr. X* (with Lionell Atwill, 1932), and Universal followed with *The Mummy* (starring Karloff, 1932) and *The Old Dark House* (also with Karloff and directed by James Whale, director of *Frankenstein*, 1932).

During the rest of the 1930s major and minor Hollywood studios regularly issued horror films. New antagonists were developed: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (directed by James Whale and starring Boris Karloff, 1935), *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (starring Lon Chaney, Jr., and Lugosi, 1943), and *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. The attraction of the horror film seemed widespread; audiences wanted to be frightened in socially acceptable ways.

The costs of production were low. Screenplays were easy to develop since the literary sources were no longer under copyright because they were more than 50 years old. Horror film stars may have been well known, but never commanded the salaries of stars of other genre fare. For example, Boris Karloff was paid only one-tenth as much as musical star Betty Grable. In addition, the genre could make efficient use (with judicious placement of light and shadow) of existing studio sets, and thus save thousands of dollars.

The horror film did take on a complex new form in the 1940s. The tales produced by Val Lewton at RKO, beginning with *Cat People* in 1942, stood out as cinematic gems among an increasingly predictable formula. In 1942, returning to a policy of producing more and more low-budget B films, RKO created the Lewton unit to specialize in horror films. The studio moguls placed Val Lewton, a former script editor for David O. Selznick, in charge. For these B films Lewton was expected to use existing sets, employ contract actresses and actors, and find and develop inexpensive scripts. Lewton created several classic horror films

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with this RKO unit before he left for Paramount in the late 1940s: *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), *The Leopard Man* (1943), *The Seventh Victim* (1943), *The Ghost Ship* (1943), *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944), *The Body Snatcher* (1945), and *Isle of the Dead* (1945).

To take advantage of a multitude of standing sets at RKO, producer Val Lewton situated his horror films within the modern world. Fear of the unknown and terror generated by surviving ancient superstitions replaced threatening vampires and werewolves. In *Cat People* a woman cannot deal with her obsession with cats; in *The Seventh Victim* the heroes are menaced by diabolic cults. Lewton did not have the resources to overwhelm the audience with the shocks of spectacular sequences of terror, so he encouraged his screenwriters to create and maintain tension throughout the film.



7.7 Val Lewton.

After World War II, RKO again changed its feature film production policy to emphasize larger budget fare. Lewton's interlude of B horror films came to an end, as did an era of innovation in the horror film genre as he was tempted to a top studio job at Paramount.

THE WESTERN

The western certainly represents one of the richest of genre traditions in the history of the American film. Thousands of stories of settling the Old West regularly came forth from Hollywood, beginning with the film factory of Thomas Ince and the star power of William S. Hart. The western as popular culture actually began in the late nineteenth century in dime novels, newspaper serials, the **Buffalo Bill** western show, and even in Broadway plays.

Buffalo Bill (1846–1917) was the nickname of William Frederick Cody, American folk hero who became known as a hunter of buffalos. In 1883 he started his Wild West show and performed in the USA and Europe. His character featured in hundreds of stories and many “dime novels,” in particular those of Ned Buntline who came up with his nickname.

Westerns were regularly produced in the Hollywood of the silent era, but with the coming of sound the film industry initially turned to other genres, most notably the musical, the gangster film, and the horror film. Indeed the 1930s and 1940s, Hollywood's Golden Age, saw a decline in the western.

As talkies took over, the Big Five made few big-budget westerns. MGM scrapped its Tim McCoy series; RKO retired Tom Mix. It was the smaller studios, Republic and Monogram, which took on the western series firmly during the 1930s, establishing the B movie staple. Tom Mix, Buck Jones, Tim McCoy, and Ken Maynard had all been important stars in the 1920s; in the 1930s they became actors who could gain work only in low-budget B fare.

To generate new products in the late 1930s the Big Five studios considered higher budget westerns. No one film signaled this renaissance, but John Ford's *Stagecoach*, released in 1939, symbolized the renewed interest in the western film. United Artists released it. Cecil B. DeMille contributed *Union Pacific* in 1939 to Paramount's line-up, and Warner Bros. issued Errol Flynn's *Virginia City* in 1940. Twentieth Century-Fox green lighted *My Darling Clementine* in 1946 starring Henry Fonda. Later RKO distributed *Fort Apache* (1948), and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), making John Wayne a major star. These last three were all directed by John Ford who set the stage for the renaissance of the western which would take place in the 1950s.

Yet an important subset was the cowboy hero who sang. Small studio Republic Pictures relied on singing cowboy Gene Autry as its biggest star, starting in 1935. Before the Second World War, Autry ranked among Hollywood's top ten stars. He regularly issued million-selling records and had his own network radio show; his traveling rodeo played to packed audiences throughout the country.

COMEDIES

In the 1940s Paramount made significant profits with "Road to.." films starring Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. These were Classical Hollywood Narrative Style comedies. But far more complex comedies came from another Paramount director-writer – Preston Sturges who wrote and directed seven comedies, released between 1940 and 1944, that collectively constitute one of the finest bodies of work in Hollywood studio history. Sturges was famous for combining witty dialogue, farcical situations and slapstick humor to create fast-paced comedies that provide insight into the US way of life. He worked with a variety of stars, and among those showcased are Henry Fonda, Claudette Colbert, Barbara Stanwyck, Veronica Lake, Joel McCrea, and Eddie Bracken. For supporting roles, Sturges had a stock company of superb character actors, most notably William Demarest.

Sullivan's Travels (1941) uses almost every kind of comedy from wordplay to satire. The story is about John L. Sullivan (Joel McCrea), a Hollywood director who got rich doing lightweight entertainment, but decides to make a socially conscious film about the downtrodden. He goes on the road as a hobo and has some hilarious adventures, but he also discovers the hard way that tramps and big-shots are treated very differently in the American criminal justice system. As Sullivan looks back on his experiences, he muses, "There's a lot to be said for making people laugh. Did you know that's all some people have? It isn't much, but it's better than nothing in this cockeyed caravan."

The Lady Eve (1941) is a screwball comedy that features a memorable romantic pairing of Barbara Stanwyck and Henry Fonda. This screwball comedy starts with the premise of a standard love story and then the road blocks to marriage become multiple and absurd. Much of the zany story takes place on a luxury ocean liner where shy Charles Pike (Fonda), heir to an ale fortune, encounters Jean Harrington (Stanwyck), a con woman who works with her father (Charles Coburn). Charles falls hard for Jean, then breaks with her. But later, at a posh high society soiree, Charles meets an Englishwoman calling herself Lady Eve Sidwich (Stanwyck again), who's a dead ringer for Jean. The movie's dialogue sparkles. For

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example, when Jean tells her father she'd like to see him "giving some old harpy the three-in-one," he responds, "Don't be vulgar, Jean. Let us be crooked, but never common."

CEO of Paramount, Barney Balaban approved all seven Sturges' satires of US society and the war effort because all made profits. So, for example, *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1944) rewards the soldier hero because of the efforts of his buddies. It closely examines what a war hero is and is not. The hero is actually no hero – but his home town hails him as one. The comedy comes up with situations of confusion and then more confusion – until the town accepts him for trying and serving his country.

THE WAR FILM

The coming of the Second World War renewed interest in the war film and brought on a new film genre, the World War II combat film. Variations of film narratives about war had existed since the beginning of the American film industry. But in the midst of World War II Hollywood set out on a war film binge, making dozens of tales of Americans fighting in the air, on land, and in the sea. While the method of fighting may have differed, the basic narrative pattern was similar: a group of men from different backgrounds are brought together and in the heat of battle these men grow close, united against the onslaught of the enemy. In the end, a decisive battle is fought, and the Allied forces triumph once again. As would be the case with any new genre, this one added a complete new set of icons: the jeep, the combat helmet, the P-41 fighter plane.

The date of the emergence of the combat war film can be firmly established. The attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 led to the official entry of the United States into the war. Within a week, Hollywood was filming war-related feature films. (Before that the film industry had been falsely accused by isolationists of advocating America's entry.) It took Hollywood about one year to reach its stride. In 1943 came *Air Force* (starring John Garfield and Gig Young, directed by Howard Hawks), *Stand By for Action* (starring Robert Taylor), *Crash Dive* (starring Tyrone Power and Dana Andrews), *Action in the North Atlantic* (with Humphrey Bogart and Raymond Massey), and *Bataan* (with Robert Taylor and Lloyd Nolan).

Bataan can now be recognized as the seminal work. It is the story of a hastily assembled group of volunteers who bravely attempt to hold off an overwhelming Japanese force. These fighting men, representing the American melting pot, soon grow into a cohesive fighting group and use their strengths to fight for the common good. The audience knew the story (the holding of the Bataan peninsula so that Allied forces could regroup and return to recapture the Philippines), and flocked to the film. The formula for the combat film was thus established, and the genre thrived and continued well after the end of the war.

FILM NOIR

Not all genres are as easy to define as the musical, the gangster film, the horror film, the western, or the war film. Consider the case of the film noir (French for "black film") of the 1940s. Unlike the classic film genres, film noir was not recognized as a genre in the 1940s. Later critics located and labeled this body of Hollywood films which have a common film style, tone, and mood. And even 40 years later, film historians do not seem to agree even on which films constitute proper examples. Film noir candidates include *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), *Out of the Past* (1947), and *They Live By Night* (1949).

Certainly film noir is not a genre in the standard sense of the term. Hollywood in the 1940s did not set out make film noir; nor did movie-goers choose to see one in the way they might have chosen to attend

a western or musical. Film noir can best be characterized as a deviation from the norm of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style of filmmaking. The label film noir, coined by the French after World War II, has always been used to designate Hollywood films that were somber in tone, absent of daylight, and unhappy in the end, that is, different from the more optimistic fare of the period. Stylistically, film noir is characterized by dappled lighting, frequent flashbacks, omniscient voice-over narrators, and threatening off-beat settings (often shot on location).

Typical film noir stories feature psychologically unstable heroes, the lack of traditional romantic relationships among the characters, and resolutions which do not fit the required tradition of the “happy ending.” An examination of film noir takes the movie historian to the very heart of what it means to be a member of a film genre. Usually a film genre is defined by common narrative traits; film noir is classified by other features such as “unhappy endings,” stories of fatalism, and cynical, corrupt characters. Some critics even define *Casablanca* (1943) as a film noir.



7.8 Shots from *Call Northside 777* (Henry Hathaway, 1948). New technology – the fax machine – saves an innocent man.

Call Northside 777 (directed by Henry Hathaway, 1948) provides a clear-cut example as Jimmy Stewart plays a cynical newspaper man seeking to overturn the conviction of a man wrongly sent to jail for murder. What this film pioneered was a documentary-style film noir. Shot on location in Chicago, then city landmarks such as the **Merchandise Mart** and the **Holy Trinity Polish Mission** can be seen throughout the film.

In 1932, a policeman was killed and Frank Wiecek (Conte) sentenced to life. Eleven years later, a newspaper ad by Wiecek’s mother leads reporter P. J. McNeal (Stewart) to look more closely into the case. McNeal continues to believe Frank guilty, but when he starts to change his mind, he meets increased resistance from authorities unwilling to be proved wrong. Eventually Frank is proved innocent by expanding a photograph showing the date on a newspaper. This scene is fictional to meet the needs of a “happy ending,” but the resistance only serves to make McNeal grow more and more cynical. On location Chicago becomes almost a character – filled with cynicism and corruption.

SCIENCE FICTION FILMS

Science fiction movies have been popular since the 1960s but in the 1930s and 1940s they were the product of the minor studios noted in the prior chapter. In 1936 Universal introduced a serial series – taken from comics pages of the newspapers – *Flash Gordon*. With what today seem to be crude special effects, Flash Gordon, Dale, and a bewildered (yet brilliant) Dr. Zarkov defended earth from the evil planet Mongo. Unlike the similar plot in *Star Wars* that was one feature film, *Flash Gordon* was a serial, where it would take 13 “chapters” – one shown each week – to make earth safe again. This required 13 paid admissions – not just one. But once hooked on episode #1, patrons returned to see how it would come out. The foundation of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style was one 100-minute feature plus shorts subjects – usually for an

The Holy Trinity Polish Mission, an opulent cathedral for Roman Catholic Polish immigrants in Chicago, opened in 1906.

The Merchandise Mart was located in Chicago and was one of the world’s largest buildings, built in Art Deco style. It was opened in 1930 and designed to host vendors and buyers of wholesale goods under a single roof.

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adult audience. The serial aimed to attract crowds, mostly young people, to repeatedly come back – usually every weekend.

The success of *Flash Gordon* (1936) inspired other studios to follow suit with other costumed comic-strip, super-hero characters including Buck Rogers and Captain Midnight. These were among the first Hollywood films sold to television in the 1950s, and ironically helped movie theaters lose business to free TV.

AUTEURS

During the studio era individual filmmakers struggled to add distinctive touches to Classical Hollywood Narrative Style films. In the feature films released in Hollywood during the 1930s, the contributions of producers, writers, directors, and others behind the camera (including cinematographers, set designers, composers, and editors) can be analyzed by seeking out common stylistic traits, formal permutations, and thematic constructs within that individual's opus of films. During the Golden Age of Hollywood, we can consider three types of auteurs:

- (1) Certain auteurs are associated with the recurring use of complex patterns of film style, while remaining generally faithful to the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style cinema. For example, an Alfred Hitchcock film is usually filled with sophisticated editing touches while an Orson Welles' effort typically contains complicated camera flourishes.
- (2) On the level of story-telling, the auteur could develop unique characters in innovative narrative situations. The common traits of the bashful hero (played by Jimmy Stewart) highlight the films of Frank Capra.
- (3) Finally there is the level of thematic complexity. John Ford's films moved from a flattering, glowing vision of the settling of the American West in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) to a somber, dark portrait in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962).

No Hollywood auteur could break with the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style without the risk of being forced out of the system altogether, as some were. But certain individuals were able to survive and even thrive within the rigid constraints of the Hollywood studio system, regularly turning out intense, moving films. Producers, since they worked directly for the studio chiefs, had the most opportunities for innovation, but proved the least venturesome. The multitude of workers behind the camera, at the opposite end of the scale, had precious little power and formed unions and guilds with strict rules for conduct to maximize what leverage they possessed. However, directors, who regularly turned out popular fare, were most able to manipulate the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style system to create stunning, fascinating films that were fully appreciated only decades later.

PRODUCERS

The producer within the Hollywood studio system supervised the creation of a slate of films each year. Depending on the business model, he or she may have been in charge of turning out a group of unrelated films or of overseeing a handful of films in one particular genre or with one star. Producers who prospered in Hollywood by-and-large played it very conservatively.

Consider the case of Henry Blanke of Warner Bros. During his tenure, he produced such varied works as *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1936), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), *Jezebel* (1938), *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), and *The Fountainhead* (1949). In all of his work no clear pattern of story, theme, or style emerged. Blanke fully embraced the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style and worked to create movies that

would guarantee the greatest profits for his bosses, the brothers Warner.

The more innovative producers were independent operators such as Sam Goldwyn and David O. Selznick. Each learned his trade at a major company and then split off, distributing films through RKO or United Artists. Both sought to make the most money for themselves by trying unique combinations of story material and talent.

In the 1930s Sam Goldwyn took his inspiration from popular Broadway plays and acclaimed novels. From Broadway came the controversial bleak study of the negative side of the American city, *Dead End* (1937), and later the musical *Guys and Dolls* (1955). But Sam Goldwyn will probably be best remembered for *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), based on a MacKinlay Kantor novel, adapted to the screen by Robert Sherwood. This timely film took advantage of the interest in the returning World War II veterans to create a work of unique charm, richness, and beauty.



7.9 Samuel Goldwyn.

David O. Selznick also came to the film business early on and chafed working under a number of strong studio bosses, including his own father-in-law, Louis B. Mayer. In the 1930s, Selznick went off on his own and produced a collection of top pictures for his own company, Selznick International. He is most remembered for the highest-grossing film of the studio era, *Gone With the Wind* (1939). Without a doubt, David O. Selznick controlled all phases of that film's production. In the process, he hired and fired three directors and any number of screenwriters. But while no one can deny the economic and social importance of *Gone With the Wind*, that **Civil War** epic did not break with Classical Hollywood Narrative Style filmmaking. After *Gone with the Wind*, Selznick squandered his career by spending the rest of his life unsuccessfully trying to make a film to best it.

In the end, the most successful producers of the studio era were those who were able to work within the constraints presented to them. Indeed, it seems the more difficult the restrictions, the greater chance for success. This certainly was the case with Val Lewton, discussed earlier, who supervised a number of the finest genre films Hollywood has ever released. For example, severe budget restrictions led Val Lewton to experiment with the conventions of the horror film genre, producing some of the most complex films of the studio era. Lewton proved that by carefully working within Hollywood's prescribed rules, he could produce films with a distinctive style and flair, recognized at the time by audiences, some critics, and later by film historians.

THE HOLLYWOOD CRAFTS

The producers may have had the power, but they were greatly outnumbered by the studio craftspeople, from hairdressers to grips, camera operators to editors. Unfortunately most labored under strict orders from above, and only through unionization were they able to gain even a measure of control over their careers. But there were exceptions.

The Civil War (1861–1865) was a conflict between the Northern and Southern states of the US, also called the "War between the States." After the election of President Lincoln in 1860 the Southern states declared independency of the federal government. One of the major issues was the abolition of slavery which was finally achieved by Lincoln in 1863 and constituted by law in 1865.



7.10 Gregg Toland, pictured on the set of *Citizen Kane* with Orson Welles.



7.11 Edith Head, one of Hollywood's most talented costume designers.

Cinematographers made fundamental contributions to any film by planning the lighting, supervising camera placement and movement, and instructing those who operated the cameras which recorded the images. We have seen how Gregg Toland, discussed earlier, played a significant role in introducing deep space cinematography. For a time during the early 1940s, Toland even became as well-known as most directors and producers, recognized and praised as a cinematographer-artist by both movie fans and critics alike.

But more typically the cinematographer of the Studio era skillfully served the director, producer, and studio. His or her job required the creation of images which fit within the accepted boundaries of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style system. Cinematographer James Wong Howe noted that the only function of cinematography is to express the story in its own dramatic terms. Thus, the cinematographer, even when doing a first-rate job, simply served as a member of a team whose goal was to create a Classical Hollywood Narrative Style text.

Ernest Haller, for example, helped photograph *Gone with the Wind* and earned an Oscar for his lush Technicolor images. Over a 45-year career (which spanned the complete studio era), Haller worked on more than 100 films, principally for Warner Bros., including *The Dawn Patrol* (1930), *Jezebel* (1938), and *Mildred Pierce* (1945). But these films stand as star vehicles (for Errol Flynn, Bette Davis, and Joan Crawford respectively). Few would have anticipated that the Haller of *The Dawn Patrol* would become the Haller of *Mildred Pierce*. As a cinematographer, he adapted to the dominant trends of the day.

Cinematographers were not the only craftspeople who helped create a distinctive look in the Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s. Costume designers certainly assisted in creating the look of a star. Edith Head, possibly the most famous costume designer of her era, worked at Paramount, fashioning costumes for Marlene Dietrich, Carole Lombard, Gloria Swanson, Mae West, Bob Hope, and Bing Crosby. Her career included her Latin Look for Barbara Stanwyck in *The Lady Eve* (1941) and her "Sarong Look" for Dorothy

William Faulkner (1897–1962) was an American (screen)writer and Nobel Prize winner in Literature (1949) known for his experimental novels, for example The Sound and the Fury (1929). Faulkner wrote many scripts for Hollywood often in collaboration with other screenwriters.

Lamour in the top grossing “Road” pictures of the 1940s. Edith Head won eight Oscars and helped set fashion trends for two decades.

During the post-production process of Classical Hollywood movie making, editors assembled the final film. They had to ensure the narrative continuity, and they often helped the pacing of dramas and comedies. The studio’s chief editor served as an extension of the production boss. Margaret Booth, for example, trained in the era of D. W. Griffith and rose to head the MGM editing department where she remained throughout the studio era. She actually cut few films but assigned, supervised and checked on all movies that were distributed by the studio. As Louis B. Mayer’s assistant, she was the final arbiter in preserving the rules of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style cinema.

Screenwriters have long been the most vocal in claiming their rightful due within the Hollywood system of the 1930s and 1940s. Frequently Hollywood’s finest work of the studio era came from directors who also wrote their own scripts (Orson Welles, Billy Wilder, and Preston Sturges, for example), or writer-director combinations (for example, John Ford with Dudley Nichols and, later, Frank Nugent). All too often, however, screenwriters worked at the whim of an uncaring producer, serving as yet another employee in the mass production scheme of the studio system.

One overlooked Hollywood craft, however, created a component of the feature film which could stand on its own: film music. The finest composer of the Studio Era may have been Bernard Herrmann. This extraordinary talent added music to many a fine film from *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) to *Vertigo* (1958) and *Psycho* (1960). Herrmann’s rich leitmotifs and dark sounds added an additional dimension to films directed by Orson Welles, Robert Wise, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and Alfred Hitchcock. Herrmann worked best when assigned to a collaborator who appreciated his extraordinary gifts. Herrmann never controlled the complete thematic or stylistic destiny of a film but few on which he worked were not made more memorable because of his unique talents.

DIRECTORS

A number of influential and important directors of the Studio Era trained in the silent era, although they would claim their fame and fortune within the Hollywood system of the 1930s and 1940s. Howard Hawks, John Ford, and Frank Capra were directors who prospered in the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema.

Howard Hawks represented Hollywood filmmaking at its best. He could make films in every genre and make them well. He directed gangster films (*Scarface*, 1932), detective films (*The Big Sleep*, 1946), as well as westerns (*Red River*, 1948). The independent-minded Hawks (who rarely worked for any one studio very long) was able to infuse his particular vision of the world into all of these seemingly disparate formulae. Hawks always stuck to the rules, but through subtle permutations in editing, dialogue, character, and space, he created many of the most complex and interesting films of the Golden Age of Hollywood.

Hawks always started with an elegant, tightly woven script in whose creation he had invariably played a dominant role. He never hesitated to hire top writers, including **William Faulkner**, **Ben Hecht**, and **Jules Furthman**. His narratives often centered on a group of men, usually professionals, who were fervently committed to their careers and skilled at what they did. Less dedicated characters were not admitted to an inner circle which was headed by a tough old pro and his much younger protégé. The tension between characters led to terse conversations; there were few long speeches or rigid pronouncements. Actions, not words, define Hawks’ body of films.

Ben Hecht (1894–1964) was a very productive and successful American novelist, playwright, and screenwriter. He won two Oscars for Best Writing, Original Story: in 1927 for Underworld (1927) and in 1936 for The Scoundrel (1935) (shared with Charles MacArthur).

Jules Furthman (1888–1966) was an American journalist and screenwriter. Amongst his best-known films are Mutiny on the Bounty (1935), To Have and Have Not (1944), The Big Sleep (1946) (both with William Faulkner), and Rio Bravo (1959).

Within this Hawksian world, the director masterfully manipulates the personae of many a noted star. Seemingly disparate personalities such as John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart did their best work under Hawks' tutelage. But many directors were able to work with top stars. Hawks was also able to take seemingly bad actors, and fashion characters often more appreciated abroad than in their home country. Even as late as 1959, he could sign an unappreciated Angie Dickinson and teen heartthrob Ricky Nelson and have them create the memorable characters Feathers and Colorado in *Rio Bravo*.

John Ford made a specialty of the western, but also directed other types of films. Early in the 1930s, Ford directed a number of popular films starring his employer's (Twentieth Century-Fox) top star Will Rogers: *Dr. Bull* (1933), *Judge Priest* (1934), and *Steamboat Round the Bend* (1935), Rogers' final film before his tragic

death. John Ford also directed a number of features set in his parents' native Ireland. *The Informer* (1935), a serious tale of the Irish rebellion, received many an award in its day. In retrospect, it seems stodgy when compared to the vitality of *The Quiet Man* (1952), a less pretentious film about an Irishman returning to settle in his native land after a stay in the United States. Ford also based some of his films on historical American events: *The Prisoner of Shark Island* (1936), *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940).

Arguably Ford created his best work in the western; some even maintain that he fashioned the greatest westerns in American cinema history from *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) to *The Searchers* (1956). In creating the archetype for the genre in *My Darling Clementine*, he specified the classic cinematic shoot-out, the famous final gunfight at the OK Corral where Wyatt Earp and his brothers avenge the murder of their youngest brother. Against the harsh background of the buttes and desert of Monument Valley, Ford plays out the drama of the settling of the West. The Earps ally with Clementine Carter and Doc Holliday to rid the town of the evil Clantons and in the end leave Clementine as the new schoolteacher, the very heart of the civilizing of the Old West.

Ford examined all facets of the settling of the West: from the perspective of the military itself in *Fort Apache* (1948), through the eyes of a crazed madman in *The Searchers*, and from the perspective of Native Americans in *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964). His later westerns emphasize the hypocrisy and sham of the myth of the western.

John Ford managed to make many of the best films ever to come out of Hollywood, and he managed to make some of the worst. Only by focusing on certain works, like those noted above, can we truly underline



7.12 John Ford.

his greatness. But there remain questions. Why did he not have a more consistent output? Why did he make the turgid *Mogambo* (1953) or the indulgent *Wings of Eagles* (1957) before and after *The Searchers*? Certainly John Ford stands as an auteur of the highest order, but it remains for historical analysis to ferret out all the ambiguities and inconsistencies in his long career.

Frank Capra celebrated the common man caught up in a world he did not understand. Indeed Capra so honored the small-town American that his narrative form and themes have been labeled “Capra-corn.” Upon close examination, the Capra canon reveals a director who skillfully used actors (Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper) and formulated narratives with an ideological understanding of America that even the most cynical could not resist. During the 1930s and 1940s Capra constantly pulled and tugged at the heartstrings of American moviegoers.

His initial hit, *It Happened One Night* (1934), is the story of a runaway heiress befriended by a self-confident, even cocky journalist who at first only wants her story but by the film’s close ends up marrying her. The celebration of middle-class values and the blending of the rich and poor set up fundamental narrative parameters which would endure in Capra’s films for 20 years. Whether it was *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *Meet John Doe* (1941), or *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), the Capra hero was able to convince the cynics of the world that simple values and true friendship are what counts, not wealth and fame.

This theme receives its darkest treatment in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. The film’s title is misleading, with the happy ending more ironic than optimistic. The hero’s (Jimmy Stewart) joyous reunion with his family and friends in the end caps a film of pain and despair; his fulfillment of the American dream hangs by a bare thread. He has missed out on going to war, making a fortune, and traveling around the world. But somehow he is told that, without him, all the small town glories of trust and friendship would have never come about. The ambiguity of the American dream received one of its most brilliant renderings in a film first seen by men and women who had just spent four long years fighting World War II.

Not all the successful and talented Hollywood directors of the Studio Era learned their craft on the job as did Hawks, Ford, and Capra. A good number came from outside the system, generally from Europe – many fleeing the rise of the Nazis in Germany. The European film industry provided yet another type of directorial training ground. Alfred Hitchcock, from England, and Fritz Lang, from Germany, provide two examples of talented filmmakers who learned and perfected their directorial skills abroad but then came to Hollywood to do their best work.

Alfred Hitchcock directed a body of Hollywood films which deal in some way with the act of looking at and re-seeing the world. His characters, in film after film, seem to be caught up in situations they do not understand and spend a good deal of the story trying to make sense of a complex, mixed-up world. In the process of working out a “happy ending,” Hitchcock carefully led viewers into his web through intricate narrative plotting and skillful use of temporal, spacial, rhythmic, and graphic editing. His editing flourishes (such as the shower scene in *Psycho* (1960) or the plane threatening Roger O. Thornhill in *North by Northwest*, 1959) represent the best of Hollywood’s use of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style techniques of continuity editing. Hitchcock also paid careful attention to sound and hired Bernard Herrmann to compose and orchestrate *The Birds* (1963), with all its special noises including the shrieks of the birds themselves.

Hitchcock constructed unified (even overdetermined) narratives, constantly reworking plot twists and character identification. In *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), one of Hitchcock’s favorite themes of the double is expressed through a plot in which one character “transfers” guilt to another. Similarly in *Strangers on a Train* (1951) one character takes on traits of another so that the question of the identity of a murderer falls

into doubt. In both films Hitchcock employed film noir mood lighting to underscore the ambiguity between the guilty and the innocent. In the end, the ultimate voyeur, the movie audience itself, has trouble distinguishing the seemingly clear-cut oppositions of good and evil.

On a more general level, Hitchcock's dramas of visual exchange spill over into a theme of obsession with guilt and paranoia. By including the audience in this interchange, Hitchcock forced movie-goers to acknowledge heretofore unrecognized moral ambiguities. Contemporary critics take this analysis one step further, using psychoanalytical concepts to argue that Hitchcock's work is exemplary of a cinema of voyeurism and scopophilia (a Freudian drive to look). The male gaze (by characters, Hitchcock, and spectators) predominates, thus raising questions of the place of women in Hitchcock's cinema. Hitchcock's narratives always seem to be resolved in favor of the male, confirming the patriarchal ideology of the Hollywood film.

Fritz Lang worked as a screenwriter and director at the height of the German Expressionist film movement of the 1920s. Fleeing the Nazis in 1933, he made his way to Hollywood and steadily found work in the studios through the 1940s and beyond. Upon re-examination it can be seen that Lang continued to use the Expressionist style (with its emphasis on a complex manipulation of mise-en-scène) to create many a first-rate psychological thriller within the confines of Hollywood movie making.

In the western *Rancho Notorious* (1952, starring Marlene Dietrich), Lang reworked the conventions of that genre, creating what some labeled the first fully realized adult western. A self-reflexive film, its songs and fragmented episodic formula help draw attention to the western form as a particular, stylized type of filmic creation. Moreover, by borrowing elements from the thriller, Lang created a western hero who, upon closer examination, functioned more as a hard boiled detective following a trail of clues. His complex use of camerawork and mise-en-scène further complicates this seeming "western," by constantly reminding viewers who know of Lang's origins in German Expressionist cinema.

The Big Heat (1953) offers viewers a familiar tale of an obsessed revengeful cop wanting to bring down the criminals who murdered his wife and child. Indeed, he becomes as evil in his methods as the men he is pursuing. A stylized mise-en-scène overwhelms the seemingly innocent world of the hero's suburban home, and links him with the heavily shadowed world of the city. This blending of light and shadow clues us in to Lang's dominant theme of a merger of good and evil. Morality, clear-cut as the film opens, seems ever so murky as the film comes to an end.

Other talented Europeans besides Hitchcock and Lang journeyed to Hollywood to make a significant impact as directors. For example, Billy Wilder and Ernst Lubitsch permanently took their



7.13 Shots from *The Big Heat* (Fritz Lang, 1953). Close-up of the letter that will be used for blackmail (1); the gangster's modern girlfriend (2); a reflected relationship (3).

place within the Hollywood system and made comedies from a slightly oblique perspective. Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), *Design for Living* (1933), and *Ninotchka* (1939) defined a new style of sophisticated comedy. Wilder fled Nazi Germany, arriving in the movie colony in the mid-1930s. There he served an apprenticeship as a screenwriter (including on Lubitsch's *Ninotchka*), and in 1942 began a directorial career which included the film noir *Double Indemnity* (1944) and the cynical examination of Hollywood itself in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950).

Historians will long argue over which directors ought to be elevated to the status of auteur. Cases have been made for George Cukor and Otto Preminger. Certainly they and other candidates ought to be seriously considered as we only begin to make sense of the filmmaker within the Hollywood studio system of the 1930s and 1940s. But there were films that challenged the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style during the 1930s and 1940s: those of Orson Welles, who worked on the margins of the Hollywood studio system, are perhaps the most famous examples.



7.14 Orson Welles on the set of *Citizen Kane*.

Orson Welles triumphed in Hollywood with *Citizen Kane* (1941) when he was just 26. He came to Hollywood because of wide notoriety for his October 1938 radio broadcast of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. Adapted to sound like a contemporary news broadcast, it caused a number of listeners to panic. Welles offers a classic example as an auteur when he co-wrote, directed, produced, and starred in *Citizen Kane*. But *Kane* was not enough to make a successful career. Welles tried to fashion a sequel, but never could. He would then go from one studio to another as studio bosses saw him lose money on film project after film project.

For example, Welles' second film for RKO was *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), adapted from the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Booth Tarkington. George Schaefer, then president of RKO, hoped to make back the money lost by *Citizen Kane*. This film lagged behind schedule and went way over budget. After its completion, RKO management ordered Welles to remove 50 minutes of *Ambersons'* footage, re-shoot sequences, rearrange the scene order, and tack on a happy ending. RKO released the shortened film on the bottom of a double-bill with the Lupe Velez comedy *Mexican Spitfire Sees a Ghost* (1942), thus creating a flop.

In 1946, International Pictures – which was on the verge of buying Universal studio – released Welles' film *The Stranger*, starring Edward G. Robinson, Loretta Young, and Welles. Sam Spiegel produced the film, which follows the hunt for a Nazi war criminal living under an alias in the USA. While Anthony Veiller was credited with the screenplay, it had been rewritten by Welles and John Huston. But again International re-edited the film to conventional classic Hollywood standards.

Welles turned to Columbia – a minor studio – to create *The Lady from Shanghai*, filmed in 1947. Intended to be a modest thriller, the budget skyrocketed after Cohn suggested that Welles' then-estranged second

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wife Rita Hayworth co-star. Cohn was enraged by Welles' rough-cut, in particular the confusing plot and lack of close-ups, and ordered extensive editing and re-shoots once again. After heavy editing by the studio, approximately one hour of Welles' first cut had been removed. While expressing dismay at the cuts, Welles was particularly appalled by the soundtrack, objecting to the musical score. The film failed at the box-office.

Unable to find work as a director at any of the major studios, in 1948 Welles went to Republic Pictures to direct a low-budget version of *Macbeth*. Herbert J. Yates, owner of Republic, did not care for the Scottish accents on the soundtrack and held up release for almost a year. Welles yet again found 20 minutes dropped from the film to make it more conventional. At the bottom of the studio food chain, Welles left for Europe. His example proved the confining power of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style cinema. Welles' only other feature film from Hollywood came for an ailing Universal in 1958 – *Touch of Evil*. He again failed to create a profitable film, and was then shunned by Hollywood.

SHORT SUBJECTS: NEWSREELS AND CARTOONS

Newsreels

With the coming of sound, theaters showed feature films and assorted short subjects. Every theater in the USA showed ten-minute newsreels. With the coming of sound, the newsreel expanded to a set place in theaters in the USA.

In the sound era after 1926 there were five big newsreel companies: Fox Movietone, Paramount, Universal, Warner-Pathé, and Metrotone (released by MGM, renamed News of the Day in 1936). The Fox Movietone Corporation was established in 1926 and the first Movietone – with sound – newsreels were exhibited early in 1927. Fox Movietone filmed the take-off of Charles Lindbergh in May 1927, which was first shown in New York City theaters, as Lindbergh had taken off only 30 miles away. Fox rushed the production process and had a newsreel at its theater on Times Square that same day. That next week film-goers across the USA saw the famous take-off. This launched the popularity of sound newsreels and thereafter they became a regular part of the programs of theaters all across the USA.

In November 1929 Fox opened the all-newsreel Embassy Theater at Broadway and 46th Street in New York City. Through the Great Depression, management discovered President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was its greatest single attraction. Announcement of his radio speeches or so called “fireside chats,” which were filmed starting in March 1933, thus brought hundreds of patrons to the theater. Anti-New Dealers came to boo and hiss. Pro-New Dealers attended in order to cheer.

With the coming of the Second World War, the newsreel companies cooperated with government censors to reduce the amount of information about war efforts. And with the coming of TV, Fox's Embassy Theater closed as by 1949 New York City had six TV stations. By 1956 only half of the nation's 20,000 theaters booked newsreels. Paramount's “Eyes and Ears of the World” ceased in 1957; the others in the 1960s. The newsreel era was over – as television provided images of the news.

Animated cartoons

Animated shorts thrived with sound. The 1928 success of Disney's Mickey Mouse – voiced by Walt Disney himself – elevated Disney to a small but successful studio of just animation. The Walt Disney Company had been started in 1923 by Walt Disney and his brother, Roy, as the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio.

It had the name of Walt Disney Productions in the 1930s and 1940s. The Disney brothers innovated Mickey Mouse cartoons in 1928. In 1929 came the *Silly Symphonies: The Skeleton Dance in Black and White*. To help the company, in 1932 the Disney brothers allied with Technicolor and created the first full-color cartoon, *Flowers and Trees*. The following year came the *The Three Little Pigs* with the song: “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?” This was a big hit as new fans applied it metaphorically. The Wolf stood for the Great Economic Depression.

Warners and MGM created production units to fashion animated shorts. Warners called its shorts “Looney Tunes” and “Merrie Melodies,” after the Disney’s successful “Silly Symphonies.” Warner Bros. stars were Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Elmer Fudd. Its animators worked quickly and cheaply. For Harry Warner this was a sideline business. So what creators Frank Tashlin, Tex Avery, Chuck Jones, and dozens of assistants did was make fun of the film stars, the war, and other satires. MGM created the “Tom and Jerry” series, almost as popular as the “Bugs Bunny” shorts from Warners.

Disney took animation another step in 1937 releasing *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. It was premiered four days before Christmas 1937 at 83 minutes – an extended short but sold as a feature-length film. It went into regular first-run release in the USA in February 1938. The Disney brothers spent nearly \$1.5 million to create the film and by the end of 1938 had the highest grossing film in the history of any Hollywood studio – since Warners’ *The Singing Fool* (1928). (Disney would hold this record for but two years as *Gone with the Wind* topped *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by 1940.)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was the first full-length animated feature film to be made in Technicolor and won an honorary Academy Award for Walt Disney “as a significant screen innovation which has charmed millions and pioneered a great new entertainment field.” Disney received a full-size Oscar statuette and seven miniature ones, presented to him by 10-year-old child actress Shirley Temple. Noted filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein and Charlie Chaplin praised *Snow White* as a significant advance in movie history and certainly Disney must be credited as a pioneer of what is now a common genre: animated features.



7.15 Shots from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Walt Disney, 1937).

THE COMING OF COLOR

The Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation was founded in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1915 by Herbert Kalmus, Daniel Frost Comstock, and W. Burton Wescott. Unlike the coming of sound, it took two decades for this color system to become the Hollywood standard. With the invention of the 1932 Technicolor system it was able to produce a richness of color reproduction that audiences embraced. In 1932 Disney introduced the Technicolor process for animation; by 1936 the major studios began to use it for live action feature films.

The major drawbacks of Technicolor’s process were that it required a special, bulky, and very heavy camera, and that studios could not purchase Technicolor cameras, only rent them – complete with Technicolor

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technicians and a “color supervisor” to ensure sets, costumes and make-up were used properly. Often on many early productions, the supervisor was Natalie Kalmus, ex-wife of Herbert Kalmus and part owner of the company.

Since the film speed of the stocks used was fairly slow, early Technicolor productions required a greater amount of lighting than a black-and-white production. It is reported that temperatures on the film set of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) frequently exceeded 100°F (38°C), and some of the more heavily costumed characters required a large water intake. The record-setting Technicolor *Gone with the Wind* (1939) jump-started audience demand for Technicolor movies. Through the 1940s Technicolor only rented out a few cameras and productions proved few in number, but in 1950 Kodak created Eastman Color and Technicolor no longer had its monopoly.

ENDING THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE

The fundamental socio-economic conditions changed in the USA at the end of the Second World War. The Great Depression was gone; families grew in size and moved to the suburbs. These families turned to TV and its presentations of the classic movies as the industry struggled to keep its urban cinemas viable. For example, in New York City, one TV station would show the same Hollywood film each day in a week. Thus young people discovered the complexity of *Citizen Kane* after five showings. They also discovered the Astaire–Rogers films and other black-and-white classics because TV repeatedly presented them. The Golden Age of the Hollywood studio system was over, but the films lived on.

In 1938 Hollywood behaved as a monopolist that would last forever. As a result the US government sued the theater-owning Hollywood studios for anti-trust violations and in 1948 the US Supreme Court ruled that Paramount, Loew's/MGM, Warners, Fox, and RKO must sell their theaters. Through the 1930s and 1940s these five major studios owned the key theaters in the USA and determined which films played first, for how long, and in which theaters. Until 1948 the Five divided up the USA into lucrative territories and made sure their films were first shown in their own theaters.

After the decree, the Five major studios sold their theaters and lost their ability to dictate which theaters played which films when. Thus, smaller studios – that never owned theaters – became their equals. United Artists, Universal, and Columbia began to offer special deals to stars like Jimmy Stewart. When Stewart's agent Lew Wasserman asked Universal for all the profits of *Winchester '73* (1950), after a certain minimum box-office take was met, Universal, seeing no risk, took the offer. Because of the Supreme Court decrees, Universal was able to book the film in first-run theaters, and the grosses for the film soared past the minimum, and Jimmy Stewart became the highest paid actor in Hollywood.



7.16 Jimmy Stewart in *Winchester '73* (Anthony Mann, 1950).

THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE OF HOLLYWOOD MOVIE MAKING

As Hollywood as a business changed, so did its style. As the studio system had adapted to the coming of sound to define the new Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, so did the studios with the coming of color through the 1950s. Filmmakers revised it – ever so slightly – but the *basic* principles of sound, editing, camerawork, and mise-en-scène remained the same. All told stories that seemed invisible. When TV came to the USA in the 1950s, Hollywood entered a new era – making television shows in the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. How that happened is the subject of Chapter 9.

CASE STUDY 7

HOW WAS THE MOVIE-GOER AFFECTED BY THE MOVIES? RECONSTRUCTING THE MEANING OF MOVIES AND MOVIE-GOING WITH THE HELP OF ORAL HISTORY

What role did film play in the daily lives of ordinary people and what meaning was attributed to film? These are very difficult questions to answer, especially when they concern a period long in the past with no surviving respondents left to be interviewed. In that case only the usual historical sources like newspapers, surveys, or an incidental diary are at the researcher's disposal. But if (part of) the audience is still alive, ethnographic methods like the interview can help to gain insight into the minds of historical movie-goers.

The work of the eminent film historian Annette Kuhn is an inspiring example of how to design this kind of research. In her book *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger: Cinema and Cultural Memory* [New York: NYU Press, 2002] she combined the usual historical sources with interviews with elderly men and women who all were young in the 1930s. Her interviewees came from different social classes and from big cities as well as smaller ones in the UK. It turned out that, for many of them, movie-going was part of their normal daily lives; especially in the big cities, where the cinema was close by and many were taken to the movies by their mums or elder brothers or sisters when they were still babies. Kuhn cites contemporaneous research from the 1930s that confirms this: 63 percent of five-year-olds went to the cinema regularly.

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was the impact some films had on the minds of these young children. All interviewees remembered images that caused great fear and made them cling to each other or even hide under their chairs. Films like *The Mummy*, *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, *King Kong*, and *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* triggered many a nightmare. These so called “horrific” films caused great concern with parents and censors not because of their inappropriate content but because of the effect they had on children.

The 1930s saw many investigations into the effects of film on young children. According to Kuhn, one of the most influential was a survey of 21,280 children between three and 14 years old, commissioned by the London County Council in 1932. The researchers concluded that children being frightened in the cinema should be of greater concern than the moral values children took away from movie stories.

Kuhn shows that the results of these kinds of surveys are remarkably congruent with the memories of the interviewees. For example, the frightening image of the oriental or Chinese character, like that of Boris Karloff in *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, recurred in both investigations.

The work of Annette Kuhn shows how memories add an extra dimension to the usual historical sources. Sometimes they complement and sometimes they contradict the official stories, but most of all they give a voice to those who are often written about but not listened to: the common cinema-goers.



7.17 Boris Karloff in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (Charles Brabin, 1932).

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CHAPTER 8

EUROPEAN ALTERNATIVES TO HOLLYWOOD: FRANCE, BRITAIN, GERMANY, AND ITALY

Introduction

Patent battles and language barriers

France

Great Britain

Germany

Italy

*Case study 8: What did the European movie-goer really like?
Reconstructing the taste of the movie-goer with the help of
film programming and statistics*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes how the coming of sound affected four key film industries in Europe as each sought to challenge Hollywood's dominance: France, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy. Initially, battles over patents for sound film needed to be standardized, then dubbing (and sometimes sub-titles) enabled audiences that spoke one language to understand the content of the movies shown.

The governments in all four countries took legislative action – such as restricting Hollywood imports – to protect their national film industries. In France, this did help a bit but was not enough to restore the level of film production to its heyday. Despite these difficult circumstances, four directors made significant works: René Clair, Jean Vigo, Jean Renoir, and Marcel Carné.

In Great Britain, thanks to the Cinematograph Act of 1927, the British film industry prospered until 1938, when it could no longer hold up against Hollywood. Major movie makers – like Alfred Hitchcock – left for Hollywood.

In Germany after 1933, the **Nazis** used motion pictures as propaganda to support their **Fascist** regime. They kept Hollywood out and censored the scripts of every German film production. In Italy the Fascist regime also censored films and supported Fascist film production but not as strictly as in Germany. After the Second World War, only Italy succeeded in keeping Hollywood at bay. Directors Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, and Vittorio De Sica made films in a new style which stressed the re-examination of reality in a movement called Neo-realism.

In 1930 all four national film industries seemed enthusiastic about the coming of sound. Suddenly Hollywood films spoke English, and so films made in native languages seemed to have a chance to prosper as an alternative. But by 1933, Hollywood had triumphed as audiences embraced talkies from the USA – with voices added in native languages.

But even the triumph of sound movies over silent movies was not a race won hands down either in the USA or Europe. First of all “silent” films did have sound. They were accompanied by music – from a full orchestra in a picture palace, to a single pianist in a 100-seat theater. Secondly, exhibitors had to decide when and with what system to wire their theaters for sound. A film exhibitor did not want to end up with the “wrong” apparatus and with no pictures to show.

Film producers had even more at stake. European studios and movie-making film entrepreneurs saw profit opportunities if they could control their own markets. Consequently, fierce battles were fought over what sound system would become the standard outside the USA. Indeed, using German and Dutch made equipment, Europeans saw this as an opportunity to fight back against the US dominance in the European film market.

Finally, silent film stars were also threatened. With the coming of sound, how an actor sounded vocally mattered as much as how well they had physically acted in a silent film. All film-producing countries competing with Hollywood met these difficulties and sought solutions as the world-wide economic depression started in the early 1930s.

PATENT BATTLES AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

When US film producers and distributors tried to roll out a carpet of sound over Europe as quickly and smoothly as they had done in their home country, they met substantial resistance. European inventors and

Nazism is an abbreviation of National Socialism, a political movement in Germany developed after the First World War. Adolf Hitler became the chairman of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (National-sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP) in 1921.

Fascism was an Italian political and social movement of Benito Mussolini originated in the 1920s advocating authoritarian leadership, heroism, and discipline which led to feelings of national superiority and xenophobia. Today the term is used more generally to refer to authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes.

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businessmen had not been sitting and waiting at their desk until Hollywood brought them talkies. From 1919 on, three German inventors had been working on an optical sound system where the sound was “inscribed” on the film strip itself.



8.1 Inventors of the Tri-Ergon system: Hans Vogt, Jo Engl, and Joseph Massolle.

By the end of World War I, Germans Hans Vogt, Jo Engl, and Joseph Massolle had started their experiments and in September 1922, they presented their sound film system, which they had called Tri-Ergon (derived from the Greek, meaning work of three) to the public.

Audiences proved enthusiastic, but UFA, the main German film company, hesitated because Germany was in a severe economic crisis. Only in 1925 did UFA sign a contract with Tri-Ergon and hire Joseph Massolle to become the technical leader of UFA's sound-film division. Together with Guido Bagier – the musical advisor at UFA – they worked to create UFA's first short sound film – *The Little Match Girl* (*Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*, 1925). But the innovation at a public screening proved an utter disaster, and so UFA put further experiments on hold.

In July 1928, the Germans called a conference of European sound film patent holders and representatives of the film industry in Berlin to discuss the best strategy to hold back Hollywood's impending invasion of talkies. This resulted in the establishment of a new company called Tobis (Ton Bild Syndikat meaning Sound Film Syndicate). By the end of August 1928, the four major European patent groups – Tri-Ergon, Sprekende Films NV (Talking Pictures) from Amsterdam, Deutsche Tonfilm AG based in Hanover, Germany, and Messterton based in Berlin, Germany – consolidated their patents under the new company Tobis.

Scientists at Tobis developed a uniform sound film system and began to produce sound film cameras, projectors, and short films. Hollywood was coming, but Tobis lacked the manufacturing capacity to supply producers and exhibitors in a timely fashion. To complicate matters, in October 1928, the dominant German electronic companies – Siemens & Halske and AEG – established Klangfilm (“Klang” means “sound”)

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and forced a merger. Tobis-Klangfilm would split the European market: Tobis would work on the recording of sound and film production; Klangfilm would engage with the reproduction of sound and the re-configuration of projectors.

But Tobis-Klangfilm needed something to show the public and so late in 1928 signed contracts with larger European film production companies to establish sound film studio production in Berlin, Paris, and London. In order to keep Hollywood out as long as possible Tobis-Klangfilm filed patent suits – or threatened to do so – against anyone who used Western Electric

equipment employed by Hollywood and demanded interchangeability – the freedom to use all projectors for all movies – whether manufactured by Western Electric or Tobis-Klangfilm.

All this was bad news for the European exhibitors. By 1929 they could not book Hollywood movies, and in turn, Hollywood companies lost their biggest export markets. Warner Bros. was the first Hollywood company that gave in to the European demand for interchangeability and in April 1930 Sprekende Films NV, Tobis-Klangfilm, and Warners signed an agreement to pay \$2.5 million for a Tobis-Klangfilm license. In addition Warners would assist Sprekende Films NV in sound film production.

The Warners deal put pressure on other Hollywood rivals and so in May 1930 Paramount's Adolph Zukor, and the head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, Will Hays, set sail for Europe to negotiate a global solution for patents. The negotiations proved complicated, but late in July 1930, all parties reached a settlement and agreed to divide up the world into three parts. The European patent group would hold all the rights in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and its colonies (Indonesia, Dutch Antilles and Surinam), Switzerland, Scandinavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, (former) Republic of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Western Electric and RCA would reign in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and the USSR. The royalties earned in the United Kingdom were split up one quarter for Europeans and three-quarters for USA. All parties stopped all court cases, and interchangeability was allowed everywhere.

But this agreement only served to keep in place the three-year lead held by Hollywood. With patent standardization settled, European filmmakers still needed to learn to make talkies for domestic audiences – as well as for foreign audiences. The success of Hollywood movies had triggered worries about Europe's own cultural heritage. Already in the early 1920s the idea emerged that Europeans should cooperate to fight the battle on film against Hollywood, then labeled "Film America" versus "Film Europe." Europeans should cooperate against a Hollywood invasion. This seemed more possible with Hollywood talkies now in English. But no European Union for film exchange ever developed. Indeed, with the coming of sound, mutual differences among European countries also arose. For example, a decade after World War I no one could convince former combatants France and Germany to cooperate with each other.

But how to make a Hollywood film understandable to a French audience, or a French comedy appreciated by a German audience? One way to solve the language barrier was the production of multi-language versions. This meant that the same movie was shot twice – or more – in different languages. Each version was filmed with a partly different cast for close-up speaking roles, but there was no need to replace the extras or long shots. A director fluent in the tongue of the version was hired. This proved too costly when the Great Depression caused attendance to fall – even with the curiosity about the new talkies.



8.2 Tobis-Klangfilm logo.

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There were two different strategies as to where to shoot the different language versions. One could bring actors, directors, and scriptwriters to the first producing country as MGM did in the USA beginning in 1929. But this was costly to companies in small nations. Another option was to open film studios and production facilities in the countries where the film was supposed to be distributed. Consequently, all big Hollywood companies opened studios in European cities like Berlin, Paris, and London. German producers opened studios in Paris and London. In both cases, multi-language versions proved costly, added little to attendance as compared to films which only doubled the voices (later simply called dubbing) and thus were not profitable.

Dubbing, replacing the original actor's voice with that of another actor's voice speaking the language of the country the film was exported to, was the long-run solution. Initially audiences felt actors were less natural since their bodies were dissected from their voices and protested. But this subsided, and dubbing became common all across Europe. In Italy, by law, imported foreign language films had to be dubbed in Italian before they were allowed to be shown. In most nations the use of titles at the base of the image gave way to dubbing.

By the end of 1932, standardization of technology and production practice was in place. This led to the biggest European countries enacting laws to protect domestic film production from Hollywood's continued domination. But at the same time Germany and Italy embraced Fascism and these new governments of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini kept Hollywood films out of their countries as part of national policy. The French and British struggled with laws limiting Hollywood exhibition. Such laws split the cinema community as British and French exhibitors loved Hollywood films because audiences flocked to them. French and British producers sought guaranteed time on the screens in their nations. In the rest of this chapter we analyze how filmmakers in France, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy preserved their national film production.

FRANCE

By the time sound film was introduced, the once thriving French film industry had lost all its power. Pathé and Gaumont had not succeeded in establishing a continuously profitable film production and so turned to film exhibition. Similarly, other small, often unstable, production companies also could not create enough films and exhibitors turned to Hollywood films for their programs.

In 1928 the French government decided to stimulate national French film production.



8.3 Movie studio lot in Joinville, France.

The Cinematic Commission of the French Ministry of Public Instruction proposed that for every four Hollywood films imported in France, one French film needed to be exported to the United States. On behalf of the Hollywood industry, Will Hays protested and threatened a boycott. Hays hoped profitable French exhibitors would kill the proposal. What Hays got instead was a final decree that required that for every seven foreign imported films one French film should be made. Films produced in France by a foreign company would count as a French film as well.

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In 1929 Tobis-Klangfilm purchased a studio outside Paris, equipped it with Tri-Ergon sound equipment, and began to lease space to all comers. This decree backfired when Hollywood simply set up shop in France to make the needed “French” films. In March 1930 Paramount opened up its Joinville studio, in a suburb of Paris, for film production – and for dubbing Hollywood movies. Paramount rented the facility to other Hollywood studios. At the Tobis-Klangfilm studio, French director René Clair directed his first talkies, including the widely admired *Under the Roofs of Paris* (*Sous les Toits de Paris*, 1930) and *Liberty for Us* (*À nous la liberté*, 1931). Clair’s case offers a typical example of how the Europeans differentiated themselves by creating prestigious films while Hollywood efforts at Joinville had lower budgets. With the rise of the Tobis-Klangfilm studio, French productions increased. French producers turned out about 100 features before the Second World War broke out. Independent French producers always struggled to remain viable; no strong film industry emerged before the Germans marched into Paris in June, 1940.

The coming of sound had a paradoxical effect on film exhibition as well. As film historians such as Colin Crisp and Richard Abel have calculated, French movie-going had been quite stable in the years before the coming of sound. But when film theaters had to convert to sound, the transformation proved difficult. Shortly after the introduction of sound, many exhibitors hesitated – not knowing what would become the standard sound system. French audiences, however, flocked to the talkies. This success stimulated the opening of new film theaters in a saturated market, meaning that individual theaters sold fewer tickets. In 1934 Gaumont closed down, re-organized and reopened its theaters as Gaumont-Franco Film-Aubert (GFFA). The Great Depression forced GFFA to concentrate on exhibition – showing Hollywood films.

The German invasion of Poland in 1939 signaled the beginning of the Second World War. Between September 1938 and March 1939, the French mobilized twice and finally went to war in September 1939. This wreaked havoc with all aspects of French society, including the film industry. Film production by-and-large shut down; Parisian theaters enacted an eight in the evening curfew. By June 1940, as the Germans marched into Paris, French filmmakers had fled, usually to Hollywood. Director Max Ophüls, and actors Marcel Dalio and Jean-Pierre Aumont, all Jews, navigated the hazards of gaining a visa and passage to the USA; directors René Clair and Julien Duvivier, and Michèle Morgan, France’s leading star, soon joined them.

The Germans quickly took over the French film industry. Less than three weeks after they had marched into Paris, the German military authority re-opened theaters with Nazi-approved German features. The Germans dominated the French cinema until the Allies retook Paris in August 1944.

Noted French directors

Still, amidst these chaotic and insecure times emerged many of the most important French films. Gifted directors like René Clair, Jean Vigo, Jean Renoir, and Marcel Carné were able to navigate the lack of a rigid central authority. They united to offer alternatives to the Classical Hollywood cinema.

René Clair had had a distinguished career in the silent era, but it was his production of innovative features during the early sound period that placed him in the forefront of European film. Hollywood had only begun to codify what would become the



8.4 René Clair.

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standard way to use sound; Clair took advantage of a changing Classical Hollywood Narrative Style to explore alternatives for combining sound and image. Clair recognized that language, noises, and music had a power nearly equal to that of the image, and his early efforts are marked by his attempts to employ sounds and image together rather than have sounds simply support the story line. Clair sought what musicians would call **counterpoint**.

In *Under the Roofs of Paris* (*Sous les Toits de Paris*, 1930) Clair introduces his main characters through song. The film opens (after a prologue not shown in most current prints) with the camera sweeping across the roofs of Paris (built in the Tobis-Klangfilm studio) moving slightly down to a woman. We follow her as she leaves her house to hear a street singer (who later woos the woman) as his customers sing the title song of the movie.

Counterpoint is a musical term referring to the sounding of two or more distinctive melodies simultaneously.



8.5 Shots from *Under the Roofs of Paris* or *Sous les Toits de Paris* (René Clair, 1930).

The film provides a textbook example of how *not* to synchronize sound and image. Clair consistently presents objects with the “wrong” sound connected. For example, the morning after the street singer and the woman have shared his apartment, his alarm goes off. He reaches out to shut it off but instead touches his shoe. The alarm stops. We learn why when Clair cuts to the woman as she actually turns off the alarm.

The French critical community and film going public did not embrace *Under the Roofs of Paris*, but in Germany – where it premièred in Berlin – it was hailed as a masterwork.

Largely the same crew of *Under the Roofs of Paris* worked on Clair’s next film *The Million* (*Le Million*, 1931). Again Clair experimented with sound. In *The Million* all dialogue is conveyed through song. A chorus of trades people comment on the action even though they seem to have little to do with the actual narrative. Clair went so far as to have figures move their lips in speech while only music is heard.

The Million proved a critical as well as a box-office success. Still working for Tobis-Klangfilm and with the same crew, Clair then directed *Liberty for Us* (1931). In a more serious tone he explores the lack of personal liberty in a modern industrial world. Clair depicts a mythical twentieth-century Europe in which

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freedom has become a meaningless word. The film centers on two characters who make a lot of money but eventually give it all up, and go off to become hobos. In *Liberty for Us*, Clair continued his complex use of sound and image as he had done in his two earlier films. The studio found it too much a critique and almost did not let him make it. But, at this point Clair ranked as the top director in France, and had his way.

Jean Vigo made only four films. He had been one of the pioneers of the cine-club (film society) movement in France, and his first two films connect directly with the experimental movements of the 1920s. *À propos de Nice* (1930), made with cinematographer Boris Kaufman, documented the resort city of Nice in 40 minutes. Funded by Vigo's father-in-law, this film shocked those who expected a typical promotional travelogue. Instead Vigo depicted a city overrun by gamblers, and filled with lifeless monuments and hideous cemeteries – a vision which reminded many of the Surrealists of the 1920s.

Zero for Conduct (*Zéro de Conduite*, 1933) made Vigo's reputation. Hardly a polished narrative, *Zero for Conduct* consists of a series of fragmented fictional impressions of life at a French boarding school. Gradually the boys revolt and take over. The adults who run this school are all caricatures, including the undersized headmaster. The only sympathetic teacher, Huguet, does Chaplin imitations. The French authorities banned its showing until after the end of the Second World War.

Vigo shot his final work, *L'Atalante* (1934), while dying of tuberculosis. Remarkably, this film celebrates the human condition. It creates poetry of realism by combining images of the harmony of marriage with the grimness of the Great Depression and evokes a powerful response in viewers. Jean Vigo pioneered poetic realism; Jean Renoir would make this style world famous.

Jean Renoir, the second son of the great French Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir, led France to cinematic glory. Jean Renoir discovered the cinema while convalescing from a battle wound during World War I. In the 1920s, he learned his craft making silent films. His style has been characterized as simultaneously lyrical and realist. An obsession with lower-class life provided the thematic core of poetic realism. We see a dark world in which objects seem to overwhelm the characters. His films reveal a web of inter-relationships between figures and spaces, material possessions and inner feelings which seem to spill out of the frame, asking the viewer to imagine what is transpiring outside the range of the camera.

Boudu Saved from Drowning (*Boudu sauvé des eaux*, 1932) presents the story of a tramp invading the home of a middle-class couple. Renoir constructed *Boudu Saved from Drowning* as a dialectic of life and nature. Visually, Renoir contrasts shots of sunlight on water with the artifice of the host's house filled with stuffed birds. To link nature and artifice, Renoir repeatedly framed shots through windows of the bourgeois house as they are constantly being opened to the natural world. In *Boudu Saved from Drowning* Renoir



8.6 Shots from *L'Atalante* (Jean Vigo, 1934). The young couple suffer from the hard work.

Impressionism was a school of late nineteenth-century French painters who pictured appearances by strokes of unmixed colors to give the impression of reflected light. Claude Monet's painting *Impression, soleil levant* (Impression, sunrise, 1872) inspired the movement's name.

criticized through comedy, but never seriously threatens the capitalist middle-class lifestyle and did not go so far as to offer a radical solution.

That changed in 1935 with the release of *The Crime of Monsieur Lange* (*Le crime de Monsieur Lange*) which allied its plot with a sympathy for the rising leftist Front Populaire (Popular Front, led by Léon Blum). Renoir tried to depict the lives and problems of the ordinary working man and woman. The film tells the story of how a cooperative enterprise (a publishing co-op) can overcome capitalist tyranny through united action.

To emphasize a sense of community, Renoir centers all the action of the film in a courtyard which is surrounded by the publishing company and the homes of the workers. By the end of the film, characters who had formerly disagreed come together, a unity reflected in the style of editing and cinematography as well. First characters are shown in isolation, joined only through juxtaposed shots but by the film's close, they are grouped together in long takes in deep space.

Renoir would then move to make directly political films including *People of France* (*La vie est à nous*, 1936). In preparing for the May 1936 elections, the leaders of the French Communist Party decided to commission a film. Having just finished *The Crime of Monsieur Lange*, Renoir seemed the logical choice to direct. Yet the creation of *People of France* was a cooperative effort. Jacques Brunius directed the newsreel sequences, Jean-Paul Le Chanois a factory sequence, and Jacques Becker an episode on the farm. Many who worked on the film belonged to the French Communist Party; all were in sympathy for some sort of change.

In the spirit of cooperation of the Popular Front the crew and cast worked for free, supporting themselves with other jobs, and with collections taken up at meetings of the French Communist Party. Completed several weeks before the election of the Blum government, *People of France* was most often shown (without credits) at political meetings and rallies held before the election. It premiered at the Bellevilloise Theater, a movie house owned by the French Communist Party, in a working-class district of Paris.

Renoir would make one more overtly political film before the coming of the Second World War: *The Marseillaise* (*La Marseillaise*, 1938). Millions were asked to contribute two francs to a project celebrating France. Even while the Popular Front government of Léon Blum was toppled during the spring of the 1937, Renoir and his allies, with no direct government sponsorship, pressed on.

As with *People of France* actors and crew offered their time for free, but in the end, the creators of this historical epic of the French Revolution were forced to appeal to bankers for loans and had to distribute it through traditional theatrical channels. Since the story of the French Revolution was so well-known, Renoir structured *The Marseillaise* as a series of tableaux, centered around a battalion from Marseilles and its famous song, *The Marseillaise*, celebrating the efforts of ordinary men and women to change society.

The Popular Front was an alliance of left-wing parties that would win the French elections in 1936.



8.7 Shots from *Boudu Saved from Drowning* or *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (Jean Renoir, 1932). Mr. Lestingois spots a tramp and takes him home.



8.8 Shots from *The Grand Illusion* or *La Grande illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1937). Captain von Rauffenstein (Erich von Stroheim) asks captain Boeldieu (Pierre Fresnay) for his word.

As the Second World War approached, Renoir felt compelled to fashion a rational appeal against war. For three years, while at work on other projects, he tried to interest producers in what became *The Grand Illusion* (*La Grande Illusion*, 1937). Only when the major star of the French cinema, Jean Gabin, agreed to appear did backing come through. But probably the character in the film who is best-known is the doomed German commander, Rauffenstein, played by silent film Hollywood director Erich von Stroheim. Initially this was to be a small role, but when Renoir learned his idol von Stroheim was in France seeking to revitalize his career as an actor, Renoir eagerly hired him and expanded the part. By suggesting the iron corset and chin strap (to indicate the severity of the character) and by contributing bits of dialogue, von Stroheim gave the most famous performance of his life.

The Grand Illusion tells the story of French prisoners living in and then escaping from a German prisoner-of-war camp during the First World War. Renoir used this story to compare and contrast men who sought to uphold honor in the face of the horror and insanity of war. No one person could win in this situation; only the human spirit could triumph. Renoir's appeal for humanitarianism went unheeded. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda, referred to *The Grand Illusion* as Cinematographic Enemy Number 1, and had the film banned when the Nazis occupied France.

Like Renoir's following film, *The Rules of the Game* (*La règle du jeu*, 1939) it offers an examination of the fundamental structures of French society. On the formal level both have a similar four-part structure, ending with a final segment which moves outdoors to a much quieter, more intimate scene. *The Grand Illusion*'s four parts develop a network of shifting relationships which at first

emphasize difference but in the end present characters who overcome their seeming incompatibility of class and nationality. The French aristocratic officer, de Boeildieu, and the common worker, Marechal, both prisoners of war, are linked by their nationality; the German commandant, Rauffenstein, and the French aristocrat by their class. When the French are captured and taken to the POW (prisoner-of-war) camp, a fourth major character, the Jew Rosenthal, is introduced. Stylistically the initial section of the film in the prisoner-of-war camp uses windows to stress the separation of men by class and nationality.

Rosenthal and Marechal (Jean Gabin) escape because de Boeildieu sacrifices his life. The proletarian and the nouveau riche Jew escape to a world in which the upper class is doomed, a favorite Renoir theme again more complexly explored in *The Rules of the Game*. *The Grand Illusion* tells of an escape to a new and different world, a society which may or may not be "better" than in the past.

The Rules of the Game would prove to be the final film Renoir made before he left for Hollywood. He had formed his own independent production company, La Nouvelle Edition Française, and shooting commenced in February 1939 in black and white, and ended in May 1939, less than a year before the Germans overran France. The richness of *The Rules of the Game* comes from abundant references to painting and theater.

The mood of the film, especially a celebrated hunt sequence, transports the viewer back to the scenery of Renoir's father's paintings; its acting style reflects French boulevard comedy. And its complexity comes from members of the upper class taking up violence for pleasure, all set in beautiful landscapes, but using rapid rhythmic editing to show the brutal reality of defenseless rabbits being killed just for sport. The music also takes the viewer back to an earlier time; Mozart's elegant, graceful music opens and closes the film. Renoir reasoned that an elegant comedy might serve as a suitable vehicle in which to comment on the expected collapse of Europe.

Thematically *The Rules of the Game* presents life as an ever changing game, played by rules which never stand still. No one has the time to stand back and figure out what the world is really about. The story of the weekend in the country almost seems incidental. The film plays on tensions and paradoxes and in the end celebrates humanity as the French nation braces, at a crucial historical juncture, for the end of one era and beginning of another. Renoir's masterly organization of camera movements and his striking use of deep space orchestrate a swirling set of contrasts among ensembles of characters. His mobile camera constantly seems to capture several characters in simultaneous foreground and background action. Figures enter and exit, seemingly transgressing the borders of the frame. Close-up and point-of-view shots rarely distract attention away from this multiplicity of action and movement.

When *The Rules of the Game* opened in two Parisian theaters in July 1939 audiences booed and critics groaned. Renoir cut the film from 113 minutes to 85 minutes, but its play was ended as the Germans marched into Paris and the Nazi authorities banned any exhibition of *The Rules of the Game*. Renoir's company went bankrupt, and he fled to Hollywood.

Marcel Carné remained in France, and led a limited "French" film industry during the Second World War. With their German occupiers, Carné and a handful of others created about a film a week. Most were the simplest of comedies and musicals. Before the German invasion, Carné had established a collaboration with leftist poet-screenwriter Jacques Prévert. The pair hit their stride with *Port of Shadows* (*Quai des Brumes*, 1938), *Hôtel du Nord* (*Northern Hotel*, 1938), and *Daybreak* (*Le jour se lève*, 1939). These three films represent the best in French studio filmmaking, with a deeply felt sense of poetic realism, witty dialogue, and noted performances by star players Jean Gabin, Michèle Morgan, and Michel Simon. Here were popular films à la Hollywood – with a French twist.

Carné and Prévert stressed themes of fatalism and melancholy, stylistically fashioned in ever-present shadows. *Port of Shadows* takes place in a modern (non-specific) port city which seems always shrouded in shadow and fog. We follow Gabin from his arrival to his death. *Daybreak* continued the theme of bittersweet



8.9 Shots of the conceited aristocracy waiting for game to shoot, from *Rules of the Game* or *La Règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir, 1939).

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fatalism, dark tone, and drab settings. (The parallel to the mood of pre-World War II France, awaiting an almost certain defeat, has often been drawn, and seems, indeed, hard to avoid.) In the opening seconds of *Daybreak* a man is shot, and the killer (Jean Gabin again) barricades himself in his attic room. Through a long night he recalls (in flashback) the events which led up to the crime. As dawn breaks, the police raid the room, and a final shot is heard. A cloud of tear gas creeps over the lifeless body bathed in the rays of a rising sun.



8.10 Shots from *Daybreak* or *Le Jour se lève* (Marcel Carné, 1939). Dissolve: the crowd disappears and the flashback starts as François remembers.

Daybreak was banned by the Germans. As a consequence Prévert and Carné took on a new style to work within the Nazi system. They continued within the studio, but left behind the urban gloom to fashion elaborate theatrical spectacles. The medieval fable of *The Devil's Envoy* (*Les visiteurs du soir*, 1942) proved a big hit.

The duo's masterwork, *Children of Paradise* (*Les enfants du paradis*, 1945) proved to be one of the more ambitious undertakings in the history of the French cinema. Running three hours, *Children of Paradise* is set in the nineteenth-century worlds of Parisian boulevard theater and petty crime. The film was shot entirely at the Studios de la Victorine in Nice with whatever plaster, nails, and wood that could be scrounged to create a set 500 feet in height. Shooting was interrupted in the summer of 1944 when the Allies recaptured France, and was completed at Joinville outside of Paris.



8.11 Shots from *Children of Paradise* or *Les Enfants du paradis* (Marcel Carné, 1945). Introduction of three of the main characters.

Children of Paradise stands as a tribute to the theater. Two of the main characters, based on historical figures, are men of the stage: pantomimist Debureau, and the ambitious romantic actor, Frédéric Lemaître. Their meeting ground, near the Parisian theater Funambules (also known as the Boulevard of Crime because of its numerous unsolved thefts and murders) brings them together with the ruthless criminal Lacenaire and the beautiful actress Garance. *Children of Paradise* moves effortlessly from tragedy to humor to passion, and has, since World War II, represented the best of French cinema struggling against the Nazi occupation. It benefited from being finished without needing Nazi approval.

GREAT BRITAIN

Like in France, Hollywood dominated British film-going – causing domestic producers to suffer. But in 1927, the endorsement of the Cinematograph Films Act meant new opportunities for British film producers. This law – often called the “Quota Act” – had been fashioned to protect British national film production, and required a minimum number of British films to be shown in British cinemas. By 1936 this “quota” was that one film in five shown had to have been created in Britain.

With government protection, the British film industry could now flourish. Gaumont-British Picture Corporation and Associated British Picture Corporation developed vertically integrated organizations. Not only were they the leading producers of British films, they were also owners of the two largest theater chains of the 1930s. Still there were never enough British films to meet the quota, and so Hollywood and British producers began to create cheap, quickly made films just so that Hollywood films could be shown (disparagingly called “quota quickies”). But that did not mean that British film-goers did not like any British films. Comedy stars like Gracie Fields, George Formby, Stanley Lupino, and Max Miller (as Old Mother Riley) proved very popular.

Because of the common language, by late 1928 Hollywood brought the first talkies to Britain. Warner Bros. exported *The Singing Fool* – the highest grossing early talkie – to London in 1929. Like audiences in the United States, British film patrons loved these films, and British theater owners scrambled to have their cinemas wired for sound. Then the Great Depression struck, lowering attendance at British movie houses. In addition, religious groups demanded Sunday theatrical closure, thwarting attendance on a crucial day of the week.

With government protection, Great Britain experienced a Golden Age of filmmaking. Production increased, but British film producers were unable to find a way to expand abroad, particularly into the United States. Hollywood, through its theater ownership, never permitted the widespread presentation of British films in the United States. Nor did the British films attract large audiences in other European countries. The British film industry had expanded as far as it could on its own isles, a very limited home market.

The short-lived Golden Age of British filmmaking ended in 1938. Here again the government tried to come to the film industry’s rescue – but failed. A 1938 renewal of the Cinematograph Films Act tried to discourage the production of “quota quickies” by ordering a minimum amount of money to be spent on each film. This policy failed as British producers could not afford these high investments (because of the small scale of their market). Indeed, with powerful lobbying by Will Hays, Hollywood found it easier to meet the new requirements.

British producers, directors and stars

Alexander Korda came to London in November 1931 from Hungary with a contract to direct two films for Paramount; a year later he formed his own company, London Films. With his younger brothers, Vincent, who became a noted director in his own right, and Zoltan, an art director, Alexander Korda began producing “quota quickies.” Through these films Korda discovered two of the biggest stars in Great Britain – Merle Oberon and Robert Donat.



8.12 *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (Alexander Korda, 1933).

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In 1933 Korda produced *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), starring Charles Laughton along with Donat and Oberon. Costing only £60,000, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* quickly grossed more than eight times that amount. Korda was proclaimed the new genius of British film and easily found backers. Korda built a studio at Denham (18 miles from the City of London) and went on to produce more popular costume epics including *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934) starring Leslie Howard and Raymond Massey, and *Rembrandt* (1934) starring Charles Laughton.

Michael Balcon, head of production at Gaumont-British, achieved his greatest successes during the same period with a string of musicals starring Jessie Mathews: *Evergreen* (1934), *First a Girl* (1935), and *Head Over Heels* (1937). More significantly in 1934 Balcon lured Alfred Hitchcock away from British International Pictures to direct two British films which would make Hitchcock (and the British cinema) world famous: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *The 39 Steps* (1935). More than any filmmaker in Britain of the 1930s, Hitchcock created motion pictures which appealed to audiences both in Britain and throughout the rest of the world.

Alfred Hitchcock had begun working in the British film industry in the early 1920s, writing inter-titles for silent films. He directed his first feature, *The Pleasure Garden*, in 1925. Indeed, through the late 1920s, into the coming of sound and up to the beginning of the Golden Age of the British film of the 1930s, Hitchcock completed an on-the-job apprenticeship, mastering the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style by working in a number of different genres, and learning to work within strict budgets.

In 1934, as the British film industry began to enter its Golden Age, Hitchcock moved to the forefront of his craft with *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Knowing Hitchcock's proven track record, producer Michael Balcon offered him a virtual carte blanche. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* established the Hitchcock style the world would come to love and admire. This tightly woven narrative included a generous portion of Hitchcockian black humor and the prerequisite amount of suspense. In the gripping climax, a diplomat is almost shot during a concert in the **Royal Albert Hall**.



8.13 Alfred Hitchcock, 1927.

The **Royal Albert Hall** is a famous concert hall and art venue in London, opened in 1871 and built to enhance an understanding of the arts and sciences. It was named after Prince Albert (1819–1861), Consort of Queen Victoria (1819–1901), who had envisioned the venue.

With complex editing, this sequence creates great tension, as an ordinary family is drawn into global conflict only by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. *The 39 Steps* (1935) made Hitchcock an international celebrity. Its pacing set it apart from other thrillers of the era, holding the attention of its audiences throughout the entire 81 minutes while the hero (Robert Donat) works himself out of a web of events he does not fully understand. (On the strength of this role Robert Donat became the biggest star of the British film.) *The 39 Steps* led the way to Hollywood for Hitchcock. He completed the requirements of his British

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contract with *Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936), *Young and Innocent* (1937), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), and *Jamaica Inn* (1939). In 1939 he signed a contract with David O. Selznick who was finishing *Gone with the Wind*.



8.14 Shots from *The 39 Steps* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1935). Suspense building up as the phone rings. Looking down out of the window he sees an unknown man leaving the phone booth and remembers what the mysterious woman told him.

Gracie Fields was Britain's biggest female star. Pushed by her mother, she embraced singing and dancing and toured Britain with a child performers group. In 1922 she joined the very successful revue *Mr. Tower of London* in the West End and met Archie Pitt, a theatrical producer and director whom she would marry in 1923. In 1931, she caught the eye of Basil Dean, owner of Associated Talking Pictures, who hired her to appear in *Sally in Our Alley* (1931). *Sally in Our Alley* proved an immediate hit and jump-started the film career of Gracie Fields; *This Week of Grace* (1933) and *Love, Life and Laughter* (1934) followed.



8.15 Shots from *Sing As We Go* (Basil Dean, 1934).

In 1934 she starred in *Sing As We Go* which turned out to be her biggest hit. British audiences loved her “ordinary star” persona. In all her films she took the part of an unpretentious woman and an advocate for unfairly treated workers, giving up her own luck for another one’s sake and struggling for a better life herself. She portrayed her roles with an optimistic happy smile. These were uncomplicated narratives, leaving lots of space for song and dance, inviting audiences to sing along. Establishment film critics judged these films as lacking complexity but with *Queen of Hearts* (1936) Fields even managed to please critics as well.

In 1937 “our Gracie” (as she was lovingly called), signed a contract to Twentieth Century-Fox and played the leading part in *We’re Going to be Rich* (1938), *Keep Smiling* (1938), and *Shipyards Sally* (1939). Sadly her career was cut short in 1939 when she was diagnosed with cancer. She survived but then the war started and she had to leave the country as her Italian husband was not allowed to stay in Great Britain.

George Formby was Gracie Fields’ male counterpart. Small of stature, he was trained as a jockey. During the 1920s he became a star in the music hall as a singer and comic. In 1934 he appeared in the low cost film *Boots! Boots!* directed by Bert Tracy. Associated Talking Pictures head Basil Dean saw potential in Formby and offered him a part in *No Limit* (1935). Formby was not a glamorous star, but he was funny. He

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always played the somewhat naive guy with a friendly smile and the best intentions. His film persona – often simply called “George” – was very much shaped after his theater persona and did not change very much during his career.

Formby appeared in film after film in the late 1930s. As with the films of Gracie Fields, song and dance played an important role. Formby played a leading part in, for example, *Keep Fit* (1937), *It's in the Air* (1939), *Come on George* (1939), and *Let George do it* (1940). Again he was “too British” for export and his film career was short-lived.

British filmmaking came to a halt with the beginning of German bombing in July 1940. Alfred Hitchcock and Alexander Korda fled to Hollywood. Korda, for example, formed a partnership with United Artists and made his way to Hollywood with British stars Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier.



8.16 George Formby, 1939.

However, once it became clear that Germany would not march directly onto the British Isles, a renewed spirit overtook those British filmmakers who remained. In 1942 Noel Coward created *In Which We Serve*, a story that follows a naval destroyer from the day it is commissioned until the day it is sunk. *In Which We Serve* was based on the experiences of Coward's friend Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had commanded the HMS Kelly, sunk during the **battle of Crete**. Coward produced, directed, wrote the script, and played the lead in the film. *In Which We Serve* presented carefully drawn characters in a semi-documentary style. Coward was ably assisted by associate director David Lean and cameraman Ronald Neame, both of whom later had careers as directors.

The German invasion of the Greek island Crete in May 1941.



8.17 Shots from *In Which We Serve* (Noel Coward, 1942). A song in a cafe triggers the young man's memory.

Although a handful of run-of-the-mill comedies and melodrama were turned out during the war, so were some of the most complex and fascinating films ever created by the British cinema. For example, George Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, released in 1945, became the most extravagant film ever made in Britain at the time. Despite the fact the filming took place at the same time as the D-Day landings and the German V-2 attacks, producer-director Gabriel Pascal went to incredible lengths to create what the British would call a super-production. He cast thousands, headed by Vivien Leigh and Claude Rains, filmed in Technicolor, and after six months of filming in England, Pascal even took a crew to Egypt. Critics of the day

hailed *Caesar and Cleopatra* as a Technicolor masterpiece; the public disagreed. This and other aesthetic tour de forces could not generate enough money to expand British film production.

GERMANY

In 1933, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler came to power. To transform German society to his views and to convince all Germans of the rightness of these transformations Hitler established the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda) in March 1933 and appointed Joseph Goebbels as Minister of Propaganda. Goebbels used all forms of mass media to convey the Nazi message to the German and conquered peoples. This first meant ridding the movie industry of those who disagreed and/or were Jewish. All artists – ranging from writers, performers, actors, musicians, and directors – had to become a member of the Reichskulturkammer (National Culture Chamber) and for filmmakers the Reichsfilmkammer (National Film Chamber). In order to control what was shown in the movie theaters, the Nazi government wanted to limit the import of foreign films. In 1933 one-half of all titles shown in German theaters came from Hollywood; a year later the figure was one in five; by 1935 it was zero. Nazi government censors read and approved all scripts. These measures did not mean that only propaganda films were made in Germany. Goebbels believed that films should be entertaining and should convey the right message at the same time. So he approved musicals, both opera inspired and vaudeville like revues.



8.18 Marika Röck, 1930 and Zarah Leander, c. 1940.

Goebbels liked Hollywood's film style and Hollywood's stars and believed a lot could be learned from the Classical Hollywood system. He stimulated a film star culture by granting approved stars a special status in the Nazi party and high salaries. Some – like Marlene Dietrich – chose to leave for Hollywood; others like Emil Jannings, Willy Fritsch, Marika Röck, Zarah Leander, and Heinz Rühmann embraced their elite status. Goebbels loathed daring Expressionist films but loved comedies and musicals. Film historian Sabine Hake has estimated that only one in ten Nazi films were straight propaganda – mostly historical films celebrating an heroic past and a glorious future.

ITALY

After the First World War, Hollywood moved in and took a dominant place in Italian cinema. In 1923, a year after coming to power, the Fascists under dictator Benito Mussolini passed a decree giving the government power to limit Hollywood's ability to bring in films. Gradually Mussolini took more and more interest in Italian film and sought to make Italy into a new Hollywood.

The Fascists took direct control of film production and distribution by 1933 as a board of censors began to review all film scripts and projects, and regulate the international trade of Italian films. The board banned foreign films (for example, Howard Hawks' *Scarface*) to appease the Italian-based Catholic Church. Filmmakers soon learned to work with this board to produce approved motion pictures. In 1937 Benito Mussolini and his son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano, dictated a complex of 16 new studio buildings, called Cinecittà, outside Rome. It became the Italian Hollywood. With the formation of a national agency monitoring the film industry (ENIC, Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche), the Fascists had complete control of all filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition. To help pay for these ventures, the government instituted a tax on imported films (when they were dubbed) and used this money to underwrite native production. It became illegal to show a foreign film without dubbing approved by the Italian government, which disinfected and sanitized offensive dialogue.

Thus, Italian film production boomed. The Great Depression had cut the number of Italian feature films to 12 in 1931, but Mussolini's sponsorship of filmmaking turned the industry around. Production increased steadily, from more than 30 productions in 1933 to 60 in 1938 to 90 in 1941. During the Second World War, with no competition from Hollywood, Cinecittà turned out nearly 300 films plus 85 shorts each year. Since the Fascists guaranteed virtually any venture into film production would make money, hundreds of "good Fascists" suddenly developed an interest in becoming movie producers. Mussolini's son Vittorio even formed his own company, Europa. The new producers concentrated on turning out standard genre fare, principally comedies and historical epics.

But this Golden Age began to come apart in July 1943. That month the Allies invaded Sicily and Mussolini fled to the northern resort town of Salò to run his government. The Italians shifted the center of filmmaking from Rome to Venice. Thus, when the Allies entered Rome in June of 1944, they found Cinecittà deserted, but intact. They turned it into a refugee camp.

After the Second World War, the Italians revived interest in film as art, raising enthusiasm not seen since the German Expressionism and Soviet Montage movements backed by their national governments. By April 1945, Italy was completely under the administration of the Allies, pending transition to civilian rule. The conquering forces, dominated by representatives from the United States, quickly opened Italy to Hollywood films. Italian exhibitors, long restricted to only Fascist-approved fare, welcomed this deluge. Native production withered and for a time it seemed that Italy would become another outpost of Hollywood. In 1946 alone, Italy imported some 600 Hollywood films.

But as Italians re-took control of their government, they passed laws to support native movie production. Italian Roberto Rossellini released *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945) to world acclaim. Taxes



8.19 Poster featuring the birth of Cinecittà, 1937.

on Hollywood imports created a pool of monies to support native filmmaking. In addition, a quota effectively reserved 25 percent of screen time in Italian theaters for native films. Hollywood imports fell by 50 percent, and Italy began to reclaim its native screens. Italian producers could draw on this fund which the government regularly augmented. Italy, more than Germany or Great Britain, effectively subsidized its native film industry, guaranteeing Hollywood would be kept in check.



8.20 Shots from *Rome, Open City* or *Roma, città aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945). An iconic sequence starting with Pina (Anna Magnani) watching the Germans arrive for a raid and ending with her son mourning over her dead body.

In 1945 *Rome, Open City* defined a new movement, Neo-realism. A new style of filmmaking stressed the re-examination of reality – as advocated by the re-birth of the Italian nation after the war. Neo-realist films would always only represent a small share of the Italian box-office. Critics bitterly rejected the Neo-realists' claim that they spoke for the Italian nation. But to the world of film, Neo-realism symbolized an exciting, new way of making movies and the re-birth of the Italian cinema.

During their heyday after World War II, the Neo-realists argued for a break from the past, a departure from traditional subject matter and the cinematic style of Hollywood. This new interest in a cinema of reality actually originated during the Second World War as anti-Fascists sought ways to break with all conventions of Fascist culture. Neo-realists looked to the poetic realism of Jean Renoir. According to Neo-realists, films should deal with the common man and woman; they should be shot out-of-doors in real-life settings; they ought to be in the same manner as a documentary. The studio production of glossy, well-lit images was out.

Indeed, the goal of Neo-realist filmmakers was an anti-studio look. Rejecting Hollywood-style lighting, the Neo-realists made do with the natural light at the location site. They abandoned costume epics and stage-inspired melodramas and moved to the streets of their war-ravaged country. With non-actors who provided the look and behavior filmmakers desired, Neo-realists stressed the ordinary gesture, the expression which fit the *mise-en-scène*. They rejected images solely contrived to fit a pre-conceived story, as was done in Hollywood. Actors and actresses were asked to improvise as the camera operators looked for the proper angle to best capture the reality of the moment at hand. Framing and camera movement took on a flexibility unknown in the Italian cinema of the Mussolini era. The Neo-realists abandoned the use of even a unified film stock. Rossellini told interviewers how he bought different film stocks from whatever sources he could find to piece together enough footage for his seminal *Rome, Open City*.

But the Neo-realists never broke completely other filmmaking conventions. It was nearly impossible at this time to record natural sounds on location. Ambient noises often masked dialogue, for example. Therefore, even in Neo-realist classics, dialogue, music, and noises were added later, in post-production. Deep focus photography was also not a discovery of the Italian Neo-realists. The creation of action in the layers of deep space lasting 30 or more seconds also could be found in contemporary Hollywood, in the films of Orson Welles and William Wyler. Moreover, classic analytical editing, a trait at the heart of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style, is common even in the fabled work of Roberto Rossellini.

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The Neo-realists did abandon the intricately formulated stories so common to the Italian cinema of the 1930s. Neo-realist narratives were looser; they do not directly tie up all narrative threads. Prerequisite happy endings were abandoned; endings more in keeping with the harsh realities of life became the rule. The most radical of the Neo-realist works, such as Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (*Ladri di biciclette*, 1948) and Roberto Rossellini's *Paisan* (*Paisà*, 1946), included accidental details that are never fully resolved within the story. *Paisan*, for example, presents six episodes of life in Italy during the Allied invasion. There is no single story; some events are never "wrapped up."

For the Neo-realists reality had two distinct attributes. First, the poverty and economic chaos of post-war Italy defined the actions of all characters. Their life was taken up by trying to gain a place to live, something to eat, basic transportation. *The Bicycle Thief*, for example, ends with the two central characters, a worker and his son, wandering down the street still looking for their sole means of transportation, a bicycle stolen long ago.

The future is uncertain, determined by economic and social forces over which people have no control. This reflects Neo-realism's second attribute of nature – its ambiguity. Italian cinema of the 1930s presented a fixed, stable world; in Neo-realist films no one seems to know or understand how the world works, where things will lead. This open-ended narrative quality contrasted dramatically with the closure required in the Hollywood films flooding Italy after World War II.

As soon as it became clear that the Allies would liberate Italy, these new ideas about the cinema began to circulate. **Umberto Barbaro** issued a manifesto of four points which challenged post-war filmmakers to (1) rid themselves of clichés, (2) abandon fantastic and grotesque fabrications, (3) dispense with historical set pieces and fictional adaptations, and (4) exclude stereotypes. This manifesto, a reaction against the Mussolini government, was also a moral stand which valued integrity and the accurate reporting of the lives of ordinary people. Through their writings the Neo-realists sought to fashion a new and better Italy. **Cesare Zavattini** argued that, ideally, Neo-realism ought to operate without narrative, acting, or convention; cinema should view real people in actual settings performing ordinary actions. He was arguing for a documentary style, one with minimal manipulation of *mise-en-scène*.

Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, and Luchino Visconti – as friends – shared ideas and helped formulate the principles which would make the Italian cinema so famous. They wrote for the film journals *Cinema* and *Bianco e Nero*. They formed independent production companies and after the war, Luchino Visconti created *La Terra Trema* (1947) (meaning "the earth trembles"), Roberto Rossellini created *Rome, Open City* (1945), and *Paisan* (1946), and Vittorio De Sica made *Shoeshine* (*Sciuscià*, 1946) and *The Bicycle Thief* – the major works of Neo-realism.

Italian directors

Luchino Visconti inspired the Neo-realist movement with his *Ossessione* (1943). *Ossessione* (meaning "obsession") applied a realist *mise-en-scène* to the formulaic constraints so familiar to Italians through their frequent viewing of Hollywood films. Visconti's film was directly inspired by an American hard-boiled detective novel, James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. The setting was simply changed to the Romagna region of Italy. The monochrome, dismal, provincial countryside is seen through the long-take style, inspired by Visconti's mentor, Jean Renoir. In the flat marshy country where the Po River begins to widen out into its delta, the film's central characters are transformed from unhappy folks grubbing out a menial existence to murderers who destroy human life. The husband is a middle-aged, fat, kindly man; the wife is an Italian Madame Bovary, moved by something more than lust and less than love. The lover is caught up in forces he only barely understands.

Umberto Barbaro (1902–1959) was an Italian theoretician, scriptwriter, novelist, and anti-fascist. He taught at the Italian national film school Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

Cesare Zavattini (1902–1989) was an Italian scriptwriter, novelist and poet, especially known for his writings on Neo-realism. He wrote more than a hundred scripts and collaborated with many famous Italian filmmakers like Vittorio De Sica and Luchino Visconti.

In depressing settings, Visconti made movies about people inhabiting a mundane world. One can almost smell the red wine and feel the burning sun. At its first showing, *Ossessione* outraged the Catholic Church and Fascist censors with its psychological realism and sexual explicitness. Visconti appealed directly to Mussolini who passed it with only a few minor cuts. But with the imminent Allied invasion, the film was not shown and had to await the liberation of the country to make its appearance on Italian screens. In 1944 it was hailed as a masterwork, and the initial spark of Neo-realism had been struck.



8.21 Shots from *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti, 1943). Giovanna (Clara Calamai) falls in love with the tramp Gino (Massimo Girotti).

At the end of the war, Visconti journeyed to Sicily with funds from the Communist Party to record a short documentary about a fishing collective. He stayed seven months and the short subject grew to feature length. He found in the village of Aci Trezza (on the eastern coast) a proletariat not ready for revolution. He fashioned a story of struggle in which a family trying to better itself is continually exploited by fish wholesalers and boat owners. In the end the bank appropriates the family home, the grandfather dies, one brother flees, a sister is disgraced, and the central figure, 'Ntoni, and his brothers return to the sea as hired hands. The film's principal theme is that fundamental change can come only with collective action.

The characters in the film named *La Terra Trema* were played by the locals of Aci Trezza. The language they speak is the Sicilian dialect of their village, hardly more comprehensible to the speaker of standard Italian on the mainland than to a non-Italian. True to a spirit of realism, Visconti used a voice-over narrator to translate the film's story from the dialect of Aci Trezza into the Italian which Sicilians of that region call the "tongue of the continent."

For the film's two plus hours, the camera remains confined to the village itself, its church square, and the two large rocks which form a gate to the harbor. The film is filled with magnificent panning and tracking shots which integrate figures, decor, and landscape. Depth of field allows action to occur in several planes through real time. With this sort of camera work, Visconti was able to record the integrity of the villagers and their dependency on the sea.

Roberto Rossellini probably achieved the greatest expression of the ideals of Neo-realism with his *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945) and *Paisan* (*Paisà*, 1946). During the early part of World War II Rossellini made feature films about war and service life which were backed by the government but were not excessively Fascistic in their point of view. After the fall of Mussolini in 1943, he joined the Resistance underground and fought the occupying Germans. It was in this context that he made the first feature about the Resistance, *Rome, Open City*. This influential film tells of the struggles of a priest and a Communist partisan and ends with the death of both. While the film celebrates the alliance of the Catholic Church and the Communists against the Germans, the focus is on the spiritual – since the priest, not the Communist, emerges as the hero of the film. *Rome, Open City* was shot on location.



8.22 Shots from *Rome, Open City* or *Roma, città aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945). The young boys witness the execution of Don Pietro Pellegrini (Aldo Fabrizi), the brave priest.

Rome, Open City was begun within two months of the Allied liberation of Rome. Whenever possible, non-professional actors, save one, former music hall performer Anna Magnani, acted out re-creations of incidents which had actually transpired. These constraints dictated a flexible use of the camera. For example, one of the film's most important moments comes with Rossellini's framing and camera movement in the sequence of the death of the character Magnani plays.

Where *Rome, Open City* seems to diverge from the basic tenets of Neo-realism is in its narrative structure; it is highly melodramatic. Characters are drawn in black and white. One is either for the Resistance or a hated Fascist sympathizer. Faith in a better Italy is rewarded; cynicism becomes a corrupt philosophy. Rossellini's use of his brother Renzo's music adds to this emotional manipulation as do the frequent shots of children used to represent the hope for the future. Indeed the film ends with children neatly juxtaposed against a shot of the dome of St. Peter's, as they file away after the execution of the priest Don Pietro.

Rome, Open City was not very acclaimed in Italy but was hailed as a masterwork throughout the rest of the world. Rossellini next explored recent Italian history in *Paisan* in 1946. (The title of the film comes from the term that American soldiers used to affectionately greet all Italians.) This film of six episodes traced the American invasion of Italy from the Allied landing in Sicily in 1943 to the surrender of Italy a year later. Through what seem to be unrelated incidents, Rossellini presents the conquest not in terms of armies heroically marching toward victory, but rather as a tragedy causing the suffering and death of millions of his fellow countrymen and countrywomen caught up in forces far greater than they would ever again know. *Paisan* proved no doctrinaire, simple-minded manifesto; it is a film that takes a fresh look at a tragic situation.

Improvisation in shooting *Paisan* was carried even further than in *Rome, Open City*. The script was written on a day-to-day basis. With huge gaps in the narrative, the film was lavishly praised as an alternative to Hollywood's treatment of the war experience. Rossellini worked with long takes and hand-held cameras always seeming to be in motion. *Rome, Open City* and *Paisan* represent two of the foundation works of Neo-realism.

Rossellini, like most Neo-realists, was originally allied with the Italian Left. But the left-of-center coalition government broke up in 1947, and the Christian Democrats, allied with the Catholic Church, took charge in a right-of-center government. Of all the Neo-realists, Rossellini was the only individual to align squarely with the Christian Democrats. In his films of the 1950s Rossellini broke from Neo-realism and produced dramas about guilt and redemption, caused by strict Christianity. Only the grimy setting and the nobility of the poor remained from his Neo-realist days. He undertook a series of films starring his new wife, former Hollywood star Ingrid Bergman. Beginning with *Stromboli (Stromboli, terra di Dio)*, 1949), and even more so with *The Flowers of St. Francis (Francesco, giullare di Dio)*, 1950), Rossellini distanced himself further and further from the concerns of Neo-realism.

Vittorio De Sica created three films central to the Neo-realist movement: *Shoeshine (Sciuscià)*, 1946), *The Bicycle Thief (Ladri di biciclette)*, 1948), and *Umberto D* (1952). These three films were strongly humanist and reformist in impulse, not radical analyses or revolutionary works. According to De Sica, the honest portrayal of ordinary life ought to prove strong enough to inspire audiences to alter their view of the world and to understand on their own how to change it for the better. His narratives, co-scripted with Cesare Zavattini, dramatically contrasted life in bleak, post-war Italy with the potential for a better life.

Like Visconti and Rossellini, De Sica did not simply burst on the scene after the Second World War. He had had a long film acting career, beginning in the 1920s. Indeed, during the 1930s he was considered quite the matinee idol and was nicknamed the Italian Cary Grant. In his lifetime, De Sica acted in more than 100 films, using the monies from this lucrative side of the profession to finance the films he wanted to direct.

His first directorial efforts came in the early 1940s, in transforming stage plays to feature films. With his fourth directing project, *The Children Are Watching Us (Bambini ci guardano)*, 1944) he teamed with Zavattini, who would become his principal collaborator for the next three decades. But it would take the conditions present at the end of the Second World War to enable De Sica and Zavattini to be able to fashion their most influential Neo-realist films.

Shoeshine (1946) represents a landmark collaboration of director De Sica and screenwriter Zavattini as well as a core work in the Neo-realist opus. It is an uncompromisingly tragic indictment of the social conditions in post-war Italy. The film was inspired by De Sica's observation of the shoeshine boys of Rome plying their trade to American GIs, the only men who had the money for such luxuries. He used two non-professional actors and shot his film on the streets of Rome. The grainy quality of Anchise Brizzi's cinematography and the seeming unrehearsed, natural acting provided the feel and mood of a war-torn city trying to recover.

Shoeshine was hailed by the critics of the day, but it lost nearly a million lire. In fact, few people in Italy actually saw the film because theaters were overbooked with Hollywood movies. But as it was



8.23 *Shoeshine* or *Sciuscià* (Vittorio De Sica, 1946).

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shown in art theaters around the world, its reputation grew. Orson Welles, who praised its realistic view of the world, noted that when he saw *Shoeshine*, for him the camera disappeared and the screen disappeared. It was just life.

To make their next work, *Bicycle Thief*, De Sica and Zavattini had to beg, borrow, and use the monies gained from De Sica's acting. *Bicycle Thief* (actually the original title “Ladri di biciclette” is plural – “Bicycles Thieves”) is certainly the most accessible of the core works of Neo-realism. It is the story of Ricci, who finds work after a long period of unemployment and then has his only means of transportation stolen. As he struggles to find his bicycle, the film follows him through the denizens of the black market, men preparing for a strike, poor people praying at church, a crowd lamenting a drowned child, and roars of street gangs and mad soccer fans.

De Sica uses the hunt for the bicycle as a means to organize the flow of the narrative, an odyssey by which the director could examine and record the everyday world of post-war Rome, the “star” of the film.

With these films, Neo-realism ended as a concerted movement, thereafter serving as inspiration and influence for some of Italy's major filmmaking talents for years to come – including Federico Fellini who opted for location shooting, used non-professionals in his casts, and paid close attention to details of costume and gesture.

But a greater force for change in the world of cinema soon arose in the post-war world. A new technological reality, television, was embraced – first in the USA and then in Europe. The coming of this new medium would necessitate a new Hollywood and a new type of filmmaking. Certainly movie-goers saw the difference with CinemaScope (1953), VistaVision (1954), and Panavision (1955 to present). Like the coming of sound, the introduction of television defined a new epoch of film history. In the next part we analyze how Hollywood and then foreign filmmakers handled this alternative medium.



8.24 Shots from *Bicycle Thief* or *Ladri di biciclette* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948). Disaster strikes when Antonioni's bike is stolen.

CASE STUDY 8

WHAT DID THE EUROPEAN MOVIE-GOER REALLY LIKE? RECONSTRUCTING THE TASTE OF THE MOVIE-GOER WITH THE HELP OF FILM PROGRAMMING AND STATISTICS



8.25 Marlene Dietrich, 1934.



8.26 Gracie Fields, 1938.

When film historians want to know what audiences liked, they turn to the number of admission tickets sold: the more popular a film, the more tickets sold. But the box-office data of the past are not always available. The further back in time, the more difficult it becomes to find reliable statistics and to reconstruct the taste of audiences. Sources like popular magazines or newspapers that organized popularity polls or manager reports that stated which films were popular can help us when no numbers are available. A more sophisticated way of reconstructing audience tastes is the analysis of cinema programs.

John Sedgwick, a film historian, has developed a method to analyse cinema programs, the so-called POPSTAT method (Popularity Statistics). This method does not generate absolute numbers but gives us a relative scale of popularity. Simplified, the POPSTAT assumes that the number of screenings of a film tells us how popular it was compared to other films: the more screenings, the more popular.

With POPSTAT a researcher can also calculate the popularity of film stars. For example, from a dataset compiled in the Netherlands it turned out that between 1934 and 1936 the child star Shirley Temple was more popular than film divas Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo. In Great Britain Shirley Temple was popular too, but she ranked only 37 on the list of most popular stars between 1932 and 1937.

By collecting data for several towns one can compare the findings and search for regional or national differences in the popularity of films and/or film stars. Sedgwick has shown that audiences of Bolton (a working town near Manchester with 160,000 inhabitants in 1939) differed from London audiences. British film stars Gracie Fields and George Formby, who were voted very high in the *Motion Picture Herald* polls from 1936, did not attract the same large crowds everywhere in the country. They were more popular in Bolton than in London. Bolton audiences preferred British working-class comedies while London audiences preferred big historical costume films. In the Netherlands, the data tell another story: the ten most popular films were the same in small towns as in big towns.

International comparisons can be made as well. For example, British audiences strongly preferred war, adventure, historical, and biographical films. The Dutch preferred light-hearted, humorous films with lots of songs and dances. The British number one *The House of Rothschild* (Alfred L. Werker, 1934) only comes 236 in the Dutch ranking. The Dutch number one *The Tars (De Jantjes)*, 1934) was not even shown in the UK.

All these examples indicate that an analysis of film programming can tell us a lot about the preferences of film audiences. Even if we do not have box-office numbers, we are able to reconstruct the relative popularity of films and film stars.

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FILM HISTORY

FILM

HISTORY

1950

19

1951: André Bazin establishes *Cahiers du Cinéma*
(the most influential film magazine in history)

1953: Academy Awards 1st televised

1955: Disneyland opens

1956: 1st feature-length film broadcast on TV (*Wizard of Oz*)

1959: French New Wave

1963: 1st

1963: Jayne Mansfield is 1st nude in a US feature sound

1950: *Rashomon*
1951: *Strangers on a Train*
1951: *The African Queen*
1955: *All That Heaven Allows*
1955: *On the Waterfront*
1955–59: *Apu Trilogy*
1956: *The Searchers*

1956: *A Man Escaped*
1957: *Wild Strawberries*
1957: *The Seventh Seal*
1959: *La Dolce Vita*
1959: *Ben-Hur*
1959: *Rio Bravo*
1959: *The 400 Blows*

1960: *L'A*
1962: *Lawren*
1963: *T*
1965: *The So*
1967: *The*
1968: *2001: A J*
1969: *Ea*

1950–53: Korean War
1951: Truman signs Peace Treaty with Japan, officially ending the US occupation, post WWII
1954: Color TV introduced in the US
1957: 1st televised presidential debates
1959: Castro becomes dictator of Cuba

1961: Bay of
1961: Berlin
1962: Cuban
1963: Martin Luther King's
1963: JFK a
1964: Nelson Mandela se
1964: Civil Rights
1965: Malcolm
1965: US begins massive bu
1966: Chinese cu
1967: Che Gu
1968: Soviet invasio
1968: Student uprisin
1968: Martin Luther
1969: Neil Armstrong

60

1970

multiplex
mainstream actress to appear
film (*Promises! Promises!*)

Avventura
nce of Arabia
he Birds
und of Music
Graduate
Space Odyssey
psy Rider

1970: *The Conformist*
1972: *The Godfather*
1972: *Aguirre: The Wrath of God*
1975: *Jaws*

Pigs invasion
n Wall built
Missile Crisis
“I have a dream...” speech
ssassinated
entenced to life in prison
Act passed in US
X assassinated
uild-up of troops in Vietnam
ultural revolution
uevara killed
n of Czechoslovakia
gs in Europe and USA
King Jr assassinated
1st man on the moon

1972: Watergate scandal
1972: Terrorist attack at Munich Olympic Games
1974: Nixon resigns
1975: Pol Pot becomes communist dictator of Cambodia



CHAPTER 9

TELEVISION, WIDE-SCREEN, AND COLOR

Introduction

A new Hollywood studio system

Technological innovation

Wide-screen images in color

Technicolor

Cinerama

Three-dimensional films

CinemaScope

VistaVision

Panavision and Eastman Color

Hollywood on television

The Late Show

Saturday Night at the Movies

Television movies

The Hollywood studio system

Hollywood as a changing social force

Case study 9: Film societies as alternative spaces for movie exhibition

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hollywood began to change. Black-and-white movies gave way to experiments with wide-screen images in color. This was another era of technological change – not seen since the late 1920s with the coming of sound.

By 1957, most homes in the USA possessed a TV set and Hollywood began to make movies to premiere on television. Local TV stations – needing new programming – broadcast older movies allowing fans to see their favorites over and over again.

In the face of all this new technology, the traditional studios never went away, but instead re-ordered themselves. MGM fell from the top of the new studio system to its nadir. The brothers Warner sold their studio and it was recreated as Warner Communication. Paramount became part of a multi-faceted conglomerate. Columbia Pictures and United Artists became home to independent directors. The Disney studio ceased making animated shorts and turned to making live features. Twentieth Century-Fox also went through a difficult period, but emerged in the 1970s with *Star Wars* (1977). To the top of the Hollywood studio system went Lew Wasserman's Universal Studio because of *Jaws* in the summer of 1975. One film could offer a major studio not just a movie hit, but also institute a whole and complete popular culture trend.

A NEW HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM

After the Second World War, the Hollywood film industry began to change. Those who had been loyal film fans began to look for a better life: finding nicer homes in the suburbs, buying cars and refrigerators. Weekly movie attendance in theaters in the United States crested in 1946 and then began to steadily fall. By the early 1960s, attendance was one-half what it had been in the glory days of World War II. Box-office revenues never fell as dramatically because ticket prices surged ever upward. By 1960, thousands of formerly flourishing neighborhood theaters closed forever.

The causes of this decline in movie-going have been much debated. Commentators generally blame television, making a clear, simple, and straightforward argument of substitution. Once television programming commenced in the United States after World War II, the standard argument goes, movie fans stayed home, attracted by the free entertainment. Going out to the movies suddenly became a relatively expensive night out (admission fees plus parking and baby sitter costs), requiring a long journey to the center city or the old neighborhood. Television entertainment was so much cheaper that millions of families simply stayed home.

This historical analysis is flawed, for it ignores the fact that in most parts of the United States broadcast television only became a viable entertainment alternative after 1952, once the US agency in charge of the allocation of needed broadcasting licenses (the Federal Communication Commission) had allocated the vast majority licenses. In the late 1940s, only one-third of the nation had TV sets. This was precisely when millions upon millions stopped going to the movies. Television has long provided a convenient, visible villain, but it was simply not available in most parts of the United States when the abandonment of going out to the movies started in 1946. Thus, film historians have begun to look for other reasons to explain the vanishing movie audience.

One explanation is that many families in the USA had less money to spend after the war. The prosperity of the war years turned into a stagnant post-war world, with millions of returning veterans looking for employment. These same veterans took what money they had saved during the war and spent it on new cars and other big ticket items which had been unavailable since 1941. Moreover, people in the USA moved

to the suburbs into new homes in unprecedented numbers. The ideal was to move to the suburbs, free from city congestion and noises, close to good schools for the children. The migration to the suburbs surrounding the biggest cities in the USA was made possible with suburban subdivisions underwritten by government-backed loans. Home ownership in the first five years after the Second World War increased by 50 percent and then by another 50 percent again during the following five years. By 1960, just as movie-going was hitting its lowest point since the days of the nickelodeon, more Americans owned homes than rented for the first time in the nation's history.



9.1 Drive-in theater, post-World War II.

In the process of this migration, suburbanites moved far away from the picture palaces located in their old neighborhoods. No one wanted to drive all the way downtown, find a parking space and then go to the movies. The auto-cinema – that is, the drive-in – worked to dampen this effect for a short time, but in the end proved only a temporary fix because viewing conditions were so poor and going out to the movies was only possible during the warmer months.

There were other economic distractions as well. Families in the USA filled these new suburban homes with children in record numbers. Women married at younger ages, and the birth rate increased as never before or since. Better-educated couples had larger families. Indeed, the typical movie-goer of the past (well-educated, wealthier, middle class) was precisely the individual who now most embraced the suburban ideal with its sizable mortgage and a family of four or five children.



9.2 Mall cinemas started in the USA but soon spread to other countries as well. Example of a mall cinema in Northland Shopping Centre, East Preston, Australia.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Hollywood leaders were not oblivious to these trends. They encouraged the building of auto-oriented theaters. During one week in June of 1956, for the first time, more people went to the drive-ins than to the traditional “hard-top” theaters, initiating a pattern in which summer became the peak movie-going season of the year. A longer-term and more permanent reaction to the suburbanization of the United States of America came with the shopping center theater, but this phenomenon did not occur until shopping centers were opened in record numbers in the 1960s. By the late 1960s, with thousands of new shopping centers in place, the setting of movie attendance shifted to what we know today as the mall. With acres of free parking and ideal access by highway, the shopping center – America’s new downtown – accommodated thousands of indoor screens and became the center of America’s movie-going habit.

At first, one or two theaters were housed together near or as part of a planned shopping center. Gradually, the multiplex of six to 20 screens became the focus of Hollywood’s movie producers. Traditional, one-screen cinemas downtown became harder and harder to find; many cities were left with only a handful of theaters within their proper borders. The movies had moved to the suburbs. Yet back at their new suburban homes, Americans found a new source of entertainment: television. Middle-class suburbanites, who had already abandoned the movies, embraced television watching. After buying a TV set, parents put the kids in front of the TV to be entertained. Families stopped going out to the movies; as did young people without cars.

Hollywood had other problems which exacerbated the situation. During the 1930s and 1940s, the major Hollywood studios directly controlled their own destinies by owning the most important theaters in the USA. But just as suburbanization fundamentally altered the way Americans lived, the US Supreme Court forced Hollywood to sell off its theaters; as a result, it lost direct control over theatrical distribution as pointed out in Chapter 7.

The antitrust case against the eight major Hollywood studios had its origins in the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–1945) but only came to a final conclusion in May 1948. In Roosevelt’s second term (1936–1940), he turned to enforcement of existing antitrust laws to help bring the USA out of the Great Depression. Independent exhibitors had long complained of Hollywood’s domination of film exhibition in the USA. Get Hollywood out of the theater business, they argued, return control of theaters to hometown merchants, and the producers would begin making good, clean, family movies. In July 1938 President Roosevelt ordered his Department of Justice to initiate an antitrust suit charging Paramount Pictures, Twentieth Century-Fox, RKO, Loew’s/MGM, Warner Bros., Universal, Columbia, and United Artists with multiple violations of the antitrust laws. Hollywood lined up the best lawyers for what turned out to be a ten-year struggle.

Each side maneuvered for advantage. In 1940, the government and the major companies seemed to have come to an agreement. Both signed a consent decree which lasted three years. The government backed off from prosecution; the eight major Hollywood studios promised to eliminate certain abuses of power, and take to arbitration more fairly



9.3 A family watching television, 1950.

disputes between the major studios and independent exhibitors. But with the prosperity of the war years, Hollywood grew too rich, too brazen. Independent exhibitors saw millions of dollars flow directly to Hollywood-owned theaters, away from their own box-offices. The independents complained loudly and bitterly and the government re-opened the case. Hollywood felt confident it could win a court battle, but Hollywood was wrong.

In August 1944 the government reactivated the case against the eight major Hollywood studios, pressing an order for the majors to sell their theater chains. Simply put, the government wanted to split the major companies in two. One division would handle production and distribution; a separate company would handle theater operations. That was the divorcement part. Divestiture meant that the two new companies had to have separate owners. They had to become two distinct operations. Also part of the government demands was the abolition of trade practices that favored the big Hollywood companies and the major theater chains, regardless of who owned them. For example, the independents pressed to only book films they saw, not short descriptions of their plots.

After numerous decisions and appeals, the United States Supreme Court finally ruled in May of 1948. The major film companies lost. Out went all the trade practices favorable to them. But more importantly, the majors were ordered to divorce and divest themselves of their theaters. Billionaire Howard Hughes, who had just purchased RKO, embraced such a forced sale. He wanted the cash. Barney Balaban, the chief executive officer of Paramount, went along because he saw no opportunity for negotiation. Balaban also wanted the proceeds from the sales for investment in television. Both these powerful businessmen reasoned that the fight was over, and that selling the theaters might not be so bad.

Consequently, in 1949, after all possible appeals had been exhausted and all extensions granted, RKO and Paramount agreed to sell their theaters. Warner Bros. and Twentieth Century-Fox stalled, hoping for a return to the prior status quo, but eventually spun off their theater chains in the early 1950s. Loew's, the parent corporation of MGM, struggled and resisted at every turn. Final divorcement was not reached until March of 1959, almost two decades after the filing of the complaint by the United States Department of Justice. Loew's took over the theaters, MGM the movie making.

The break-up did open up the market to independent exhibitors. Many new theater circuits were started, especially those centered around the only new type of profitable theater, the drive-in. However, Hollywood film companies retained direct control of their markets through distribution. They still had the best films and dictated to whom they sold them. Thus Hollywood was not broken by the *Paramount* decision – as the ruling of the Supreme Court became known – just wounded. Although the major companies probably would have done far better in adjusting to the new world of suburban entertainment had they still owned theaters, they still held sway because they had the films exhibitors wanted. Now the issue became how to make popular films which could draw suburbanites out of the house. With these social and legal constraints, Hollywood leaders turned to technology for a solution.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Hollywood sought change through new technology, and its first choice was television. The movie moguls did not ignore television; in fact, they all sought to enter the television industry which started up at the close of World War II. Indeed, Hollywood had been interested in television even *before* the outbreak of the Second World war.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

In 1938 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (or the Hays Office) jointly initiated a comprehensive study of the state of television technology and possible movie industry actions. Reports were commissioned, strategies formulated and debated. Hollywood needed to be ready. To protect their interests, consultants for both the Academy and the Hays Office advised the movie studios to gear up to produce the bulk of the television programs and to own and operate local stations, in the same manner that they had previously run their theater circuits. The heads of the major studios, Hays argued, rather than the competing radio interests headed by NBC and CBS, should take direct control.

Paramount Pictures stepped forward first. In 1938 it invested nearly \$500,000 in the DuMont Corporation, a small manufacturer of television sets and then an applicant for an experimental over-the-air license. Paramount's President Barney Balaban, a veteran exhibitor, foresaw the day that television technology would have a place in Paramount theaters. With a formal connection to one of Hollywood's most powerful companies, DuMont gained a leg up on the competition. It now had exclusive access to Paramount movies and the vast Paramount production facilities in southern California. With DuMont's stations in New York and Washington, DC, Paramount controlled four of the nation's first nine television stations.

Paramount also began to formulate plans for a nationwide Paramount television network. The strategy called for Paramount's theater chains to apply for and then establish stations throughout the United States. Television Productions, Inc., a new Paramount subsidiary, would supply the programs. New England Theaters, Inc., a Paramount-owned chain, applied for a station in Boston; the Blanke circuit in Iowa applied for a license in Des Moines. Soon the company had applications for television stations throughout the Northeast, the Midwest and the South.

Paramount, however, was not the only interested movie company. Its studio rivals all sought to acquire ownership of new TV stations. For example, Twentieth Century-Fox applied for licenses for stations in cities from New York to Los Angeles. And Loew's (parent company of MGM) and Warner Bros. both sought television stations in Chicago and Los Angeles.

The dominant radio networks of the day, CBS, NBC, and ABC, were also applying for licenses. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was in line to decide among these applicants, but in stepped another Washington agency, the Department of Justice. As the antitrust case was winding its way through the courts at the same time the applications for television stations were pending, the Department of Justice forced the FCC to postpone any decisions on the applications of the movie studios until that case was settled. The communications law prohibited granting broadcast licenses of any type to corporations convicted of monopolistic practices.

Once the Supreme Court ruled against the Hollywood majors in May of 1948, the FCC declared the major Hollywood companies ineligible for the prized television licenses because they were part of a convicted industrial trust. Hollywood's dream of ownership and direct control of television never materialized. The motion picture industry had to seek other ways to deal with a world of suburbanites staying home to have families and watch television.

One strategy was the presentation of large screen television images in movie theaters – theater television. The film industry would entice the public away from their small TV screens at home by offering live television on the massive screens of the neighborhood movie house. The development of large-screen television had commenced in 1930 when the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) held a demonstration

at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady, New York. Throughout the 1930s RCA worked with Warner Bros. and Twentieth Century-Fox toward the day when the technology could be used in movie palaces.

In 1943 Paramount invested in an alternative technology known as the intermediate film method. This technique allowed television signals to be sent to a theater and then be converted – in 66 seconds – into a standard film image that could be shown in the traditional manner on a 35mm projector. In 1948, once Hollywood learned that it could not directly own and operate over-the-air TV stations, it pushed to make theater television the preferred option for the use of the new technology. The programming attractions would be up-to-the-minute newsreels and exclusive televising of sporting events. Home television could offer neither. Twentieth Century-Fox and Warner Bros. ordered theater television for their chains. Even the normally conservative Loew's chain signed up.

Paramount led the way since it owned and operated a television station in Chicago, where it could initiate experiments. It would work out the problems in Chicago, and then proffer the system throughout the United States. Launching day was 16 June 1949 at the mammoth (4,500 seat) Chicago Theater in the heart of the Loop. Television equipment recorded live stage acts in a studio and broadcast signals to the theater where the images were turned into 35mm film. A capacity audience showed up for the première, and saw themselves in the opening short subject.

But subsequent presentations in picture palaces in Chicago's neighborhoods failed to draw large enough crowds to cover expenses. Sporting programs did well enough, especially baseball's 1949 **World Series**. Championship boxing matches proved the only consistent moneymaking draw. **Big Ten** football, even when it featured local favorites from Northwestern University and the University of Illinois, was a dismal failure. After two years, Paramount gave up on its experiment in theater television and turned to other possible new technologies. The other Hollywood studios followed Paramount's lead. Hollywood would have to seek other methods to make its mark in the television business.

WIDE-SCREEN IMAGES IN COLOR

In a classic case of product differentiation, Hollywood looked to new film technologies to tempt patrons back to the theaters. If the movie industry could offer something not available on black-and-white TV sets of the day, it could tempt patrons back to movie theaters. The first of the so-called new film technologies was the introduction of inventions which had been long available to the movie industry, but had not been required for profit making during Hollywood's heyday of the 1930s and 1940s. The first was to show movies in theaters in color.

TECHNICOLOR

One innovation – color – had long been available to the American movie industry. By 1950 the best-known name in that field was Technicolor. Developed in 1917 by Herbert Kalmus, a scientist trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Technicolor had been constantly improved. At first it could only produce crude two-color images – not the complete palette of three primary colors. By the 1930s Technicolor had become one of the stars in such spectacles as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and such treats as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck cartoons from Walt Disney. Indeed, the full-color (or **three-color**) **Technicolor process** was first introduced in 1932 for Walt Disney's animated short subject *Flowers and Trees*.

The baseball World Series is a major league baseball championship in the US. The winners of the National League and the American League compete in a best of seven series at the end of the baseball season in October.

Big Ten is an inter-collegiate meeting of athletes established in 1895 by seven Midwest universities in the USA. Today 11 universities participate and 25 championships – football and basketball being the most popular – are sponsored.



9.4 Technicolor use in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

Three-color Technicolor process

First three negative films — green, blue, and red — are made, then three positive films, matrices in hardened gelatine, are made. Finally the matrices print the three separate images (in green, blue, and red) on one blank film strip and the film copy is ready.

Through the 1940s Technicolor was used in a select group of feature films, principally historical epics and lavish musicals. Technicolor was expensive, kept that way so that Herbert Kalmus and his investors could reap extraordinary returns from their years of experiments.

In 1947 the United States government filed an antitrust suit against Technicolor to open up the market for owners of other color systems. A consent decree was signed three years later; Technicolor lost its monopoly and became simply one supplier among many.

In the late 1930s, fewer than 5 percent of all Hollywood films had been made in color; 30 years later, virtually all movies were made in color. In 1971 when *The Last Picture Show* was released in black and white, director Peter Bogdanovich was hailed for creating a throwback to the old days, to the Hollywood masters of the past. Black-and-white images were forever clearly identified with Hollywood's Golden Age.

Color features certainly differentiated Hollywood's offerings of the 1950s from the grainy black-and-white images then available on television. But Hollywood went one step further and made its movies bigger and thus even better. Wide-screen images would certainly catch the public's attention and draw the lost audience back to the theaters.

CINERAMA

John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937) founded the Standard Oil Corporation. His son, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874–1960) invested his father's money.

In 1952 Cinerama offered spectacular wide-screen effects by melding images from three synchronized projectors on a vast (specially designed) curved screen. To add to the sense of overwhelming reality, Cinerama also included multi-track stereo sound. Theaters which contracted for the new process were required to employ three full-time projectionists and invest thousands of dollars in new projectors, special sound equipment, and the new screen.

Cinerama was not new. First displayed at the 1939 New York World's Fair, it was then known as Vitarama. Backed by one of the fabulously wealthy **Rockefeller brothers**, the process was reintroduced as Cinerama on 30 September 1952 at the Broadway Theater in New York. *This Is Cinerama*, a two-hour travelogue, featured scenes ranging from a gripping roller coaster ride at New York's Rockaway Amusement Park to a



9.5 Audience watching a film in Cinerama.

plane flying through the Grand Canyon. Its financiers, including radio and newsreel star Lowell Thomas and former MGM president Louis B. Mayer, touted Cinerama as far superior to television.

At first, business was brisk in the few Cinerama installations around the United States. Backers followed the model of the theatrical road show, long used by touring Broadway shows. Only one large house was converted; tickets were sold on a reserved-seat basis at top dollar. The investors sought long, profitable runs, hopefully lasting a year or more.

At first they seemed right on target. *This Is Cinerama* grossed more than \$20 million. In New York City it played for more than two years, the longest movie run in Broadway history. *Cinerama Holiday*, the Cinerama Productions Corporation's second production, premiered in October 1953 and was nearly as popular. But the third effort, *Seven Wonders of the World*, issued in 1954, experienced poor box-office returns. By then Hollywood had begun to release its own wide-screen films in CinemaScope and VistaVision. Cinerama did well only when it had the market to itself.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL FILMS

One possibility was making films in three dimensions – rather than the usual two-dimensional spaces. Three-dimensional movies, or simply 3-D, had been around since the 1920s; the technology premiered as Plasticon on 27 September 1922 with *The Power of Love*. Two years later came a series of shorts advertised as Plastigrams. But this film did not prove enough of a draw to lure the public away from black-and-white silent features. During those salad days there was little reason for the major studios to stray from the regular profits associated with standard 35mm films.

In November 1952 Milton Gunzburg, a Hollywood-based entrepreneur, and Arch Oboler, a veteran radio producer, launched *Bwana Devil*, a crude African adventure story starring Robert Stack. The narrative and

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

stars may not have been excellent, but the 3-D process caused quite a stir. Box-office take at premières around the United States was good, and United Artists agreed to distribute the film during 1953.

During 1953 and into 1954, 3-D was hailed as the savior of the American film industry. The majors jumped in head first. In April 1953 Warner Bros. issued what was to remain the most successful of these efforts, *House of Wax*, starring Vincent Price, which grossed \$1 million during its first week of release. Classic genre fare followed: MGM's musical *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), Columbia's crime tale *Man in the Dark* (1953), and Universal science-fiction efforts *It Came from Outer Space* (1953) and *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954).

But by mid-1954 it had become clear that the added expense of special 3-D attachments to projectors and glasses which had to be issued to patrons were never matched by the extra take at the box-office. The public's interest in 3-D waned and by 1955 the technology was again back on the shelf.



9.6 *House of Wax* (André De Toth, 1953).

CINEMASCOPE

The failure of 3-D did not discourage Hollywood. Since color clearly helped draw back audiences, maybe some cost-effective wide-screen process could also help. What was needed was a wide-screen process without the added complications and prohibitive investment of 3-D. The search for such a cost-effective system initiated a second phase in Hollywood's attempt to innovate "new" technology for the movies that was superior to the ever growing threat of home television. The première of the most famous wide-screen process came on 16 September 1953 with CinemaScope. This wide-screen process used an **anamorphic lens** attached both to the camera and the projector to expand the size of a normal image. Thus the extra investment required was small. The first CinemaScope film, *The Robe* (1953), was a biblical tale, starring Richard Burton and Jean Simmons. Audiences of the day were dazzled. CinemaScope seemed to be the answer, a new technology to accomplish what theater television, Cinerama, and 3-D had failed to do – win back the audience.

Like its predecessors, CinemaScope was not new. French inventor Henri Chrétien had begun working on an anamorphic process in the 1920s but had failed to interest any major movie company. Spyros Skouras, president of Twentieth Century-Fox, learned of the Chrétien system in December 1952. He hired the inventor

An anamorphic lens compresses the image horizontally when filming, thus allowing the recording of a wide view. When projected the image is stretched again.

to develop a lens which could be fitted to existing equipment. The resultant CinemaScope did not require more than the normal crew of projectionists and the cost for a theater's conversion could be kept under \$20,000.

The Robe so impressed MGM that it took out a sub-license from Twentieth Century-Fox. Warner Bros., after trying and failing with a similar anamorphic lens dubbed SuperScope, also signed as a sub-licensee of Twentieth Century-Fox. By the end of 1953 every major studio – save Paramount with its VistaVision process (a technological alternative) – had jumped on the CinemaScope bandwagon. The process also included, at least for the first year, stereophonic sound. By November 1954 it was reported that nearly half the existing theaters in the United States had facilities to show CinemaScope.

But equipping theaters proved more expensive than anticipated. To cut costs many theater owners abandoned the stereophonic sound component; in 1954 Twentieth Century-Fox also started using mono sound. From 1953 through mid-1956 all of Twentieth Century-Fox's CinemaScope movies were in color. But even that feature was abandoned with the black-and-white *Teenage Rebel* (1956). This made the product even cheaper.

VISTAVISION

VistaVision was Paramount's answer to CinemaScope. VistaVision utilized a camera through which a traditional 35mm film traveled horizontally rather than vertically. This technique resulted in an image three times the size of the normal four by three negative. VistaVision premiered on 27 April 1954 at New York's Radio City Music Hall with a major Paramount film, *White Christmas*, starring Bing Crosby. All major Paramount films of the next few years were shot in VistaVision, and the process was even used by other studios, including MGM for *High Society* (1956). With Paramount's backing, VistaVision remained in use until 1961 when the last VistaVision film, *One-Eyed Jacks* starring Marlon Brando, was released.

In the mid-1950s other even more dramatic solutions were proposed. In 1955 Mike Todd brought out his Todd-AO which used 65mm film in the camera and a 70mm image for theater projection. With the amount of information available on the screen audiences were wowed. Todd-AO was exploited for *Oklahoma!* (1955) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956), each of which cost \$5 million to make. But Todd died and, without a promoter, Todd-AO fell into disuse.



9.7 VistaVision logo.

PANAVISION AND EASTMAN COLOR

Movie theater owners soon faced a quandary: what projection system to purchase? Standardization was needed. This came for wide-screen images in color with the merger of two products: Panavision lenses and Eastman Color film stock. Panavision was a small Hollywood company whose owner Robert Gottshalk had developed the MGM Camera 65, an anamorphic system, for *Raintree County* (1957). MGM used the Panavision innovations to even greater advantage with the 70mm *Ben-Hur* (1959). Panavision anamorphic projection attachments differed from the ones made for Twentieth Century-Fox for CinemaScope in that the optics allowed a change in the anamorphic power of the lens with a simple turn of a knob.

MOVIE HISTORY: A SURVEY

Panavision attachments soon became the most popular in the world, the industry standard. Licensees of Twentieth Century-Fox's CinemaScope welcomed this innovation; it freed them from the contractual servitude to a movie-making rival. By the late 1960s, Panavision became the standard for lenses and camera equipment to make Hollywood films. It provided a superior but standardized product for wide-screen images, one which continued to be used into the 1980s.

Eastman Color negative and color print film stock was introduced by the Rochester, New York based giant in 1950 to rival Technicolor.

Its monopack form signaled the end of the three-pack (three different strips of film) Technicolor system because it was easier to handle, and was far cheaper. Eastman Color was happy to service any new customers and so by the mid-1950s had become the industry standard. In fact, since the mid-1950s all (color) films have used Eastman Color. The name may read Metrocolor (owned by MGM), Warner Color, or Color by Deluxe (owned by Twentieth Century-Fox), but the basic stock is from Eastman Kodak. Only the processing differs. Indeed, Color by Technicolor meant that Technicolor developed the negative using Eastman Color stock.

One problem eventually surfaced with Eastman Color: unstable dyes caused negatives to permanently fade. A new process was introduced in the 1980s, but not before the colors in many films were lost forever. But in the 1950s this problem was not anticipated. The film industry was happy that Panavision plus Eastman Color enabled it at relatively low cost to provide a product far superior to the black-and-white images offered by America's television networks.



9.8 Kirk Douglas using a Panavision camera on the set of *Posse*, 1975.

HOLLYWOOD ON TELEVISION

The Hollywood moguls needed a way to co-exist with the television industry. But the transition to cooperation proved to be a slow and often painful one. It took a decade. But slowly, systematically, the Hollywood movie industry found it could not take over the TV business, save making and selling films and series to television. In time it helped establish a new television genre – the movie made for television.

In the early 1950s the major Hollywood studios stonewalled the television industry as they attempted to establish their own stations and networks and then to innovate theater television. Before it became clear that none of these business strategies would work, the studios logically refused to sell or rent their films to television. They held out for the greater profits which could be realized in a Hollywood-controlled television network. In 1954 it became clear that Hollywood would have to be satisfied as a program supplier for American television.

The corporate obstruction by the major Hollywood giants did not prevent minor Hollywood companies, which were always looking for ways to make a quick buck, from offering their wares to television. In 1951,

for example, Columbia Pictures established Screen Gems as a wholly owned subsidiary to proffer filmed material (existing and original) to television. Success came with such early TV series as “Father Knows Best” (1954–1960).

The small Hollywood studios willingly also rented their back lots to fledgling television program producers and unemployed actors and craftspeople took up television work. But as the theatrical box-office continued to decline, the major studios also had vacant space. Thus, in 1955, the majors plunged ahead into television production. Warner Bros. led the way with “Cheyenne” (1955), “77 Sunset Strip” (1958), and “Maverick” (1957), all series episodes based on scripts and films the studio already owned. Overnight, Hollywood replaced New York as the center of program production for television. By 1960 film companies supplied the majority of prime-time fare.

As this jockeying for power in television production was taking place, feature films were being shown on American television. Initially they came from abroad, the bulk from struggling British film studios, especially Ealing, Rank, and Korda. Never able to break into theaters in the United States, the British capitalized on American television’s willingness to show any available entertainment.

Monogram and Republic, as analyzed in Chapter 6, jumped on board the television bandwagon with a vengeance. These two (plus a multitude of even smaller producers) took their libraries of 4,000 titles and made them available for television presentation before the end of 1950. Typical fare included westerns (Gene Autry and Roy Rogers from Republic, for example), and thrill-a-minute serials (Flash Gordon, also from Republic). Younger viewers loved these action adventures, but their crude production values (such as the repeated use of stock footage) didn’t compare to the quality of the extraordinary number of treasures still resting comfortably in the vaults of MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros., and Twentieth Century-Fox.

THE LATE SHOW

To understand how and why the long-dominant Hollywood studios finally agreed to rent (or sell) their vast libraries of film titles to television, one must go back to May 1948 when eccentric millionaire Howard Hughes purchased control of the ailing RKO. In five years Hughes ran RKO into the ground. Debts soared past \$20 million; few new productions were approved to generate needed new revenues. By late 1953 it was clear that even Hughes, by then full owner of RKO, could not afford the financial bloodletting taking place at RKO.

Thus few were surprised in 1954 when Hughes agreed to sell RKO’s film library to the General Tire & Rubber Company for \$25 million. General Tire wanted the RKO back titles to present on its independent New York television station, WOR. WOR then set up its “Million Dollar Movie” (1955–1966) series. To milk more cash from its deal, General Tire then peddled rights to RKO’s 700 features and 1,000 short subjects to C&C Television, which in turn rented them to stations throughout the United States in markets in which General Tire did not own stations. Overnight, General Tire made an additional \$15 million.

These profits impressed even the most recalcitrant movie mogul. Thus, in the next 24 months, all the remaining major companies released their pre-1948 titles to television. (Pre-1948 titles did not require the payment of residuals to performer and craft unions.) For the first time in the 60-year history of American film, a national audience was able to view, at its leisure, a broad cross-section of the best and worst of Hollywood talkies. Silent films were only occasionally presented, usually in the form of compilations of the comedies of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.

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From the sale or lease to television of these libraries of films, Hollywood was able to tap a significant source of pure profit. This infusion of cash came precisely at a time when Hollywood needed money to support its innovation of wide-screen film spectacles. Television deals followed one after the other. Columbia Pictures, which had early on entered television production, quickly copied RKO's financial bonanza. In January 1956 Columbia announced that Screen Gems would rent packages of feature films to television stations; the initial package comprised 104 films. Columbia saw an instant profit of \$5 million.

In March Warner Bros. followed suit. Two months later Twentieth Century-Fox engineered a similar deal. MGM followed in August with a \$34 million contract with CBS which tendered the rights to the most famous feature regularly shown on television, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), from the mid-1950s to this day.

Paramount held out the longest because its management still thought the company had a chance to establish a pay-television TV network. (HBO would prove Paramount right, but not for 20 years.) Finally, disappointed from its numerous failed experiments, in February 1958, Paramount sold rather than rented its pre-1948 library. The initial returns were substantial – \$50 million. But in the long run the buyer, MCA, then a talent agency, collected far more – enough, in fact, to purchase the ailing Universal Pictures and join the ranks of the major Hollywood studios.

From this point on, the pre-1948 largely black-and-white films functioned as the mainstay of innumerable “Early Shows,” “Late Shows,” and “Late, Late Shows.” (These were showing on commercial TV in the USA and thus shown with advertising interruption – early in the morning or late at night.) A decade later more than 100 different films aired each week on New York television stations, smaller numbers in less populous cities. The three television networks booked feature films, such as CBS which signed with MGM a 20-year contract to exclusively show *The Wizard of Oz*, as occasional specials, not as regular programming.

The networks did want to show post-1948 Hollywood features in prime time, but this required agreements from the Hollywood craft unions. In a precedent-setting action, the Screen Actors Guild, led by its president, Ronald Reagan, went on strike and won guaranteed residuals for televised airings of post-1948 films. This guarantee set the stage for movie showings to become staples of prime-time television.

SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES

The NBC television network premiered “Saturday Night at the Movies” on 23 September 1961 with *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), starring Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable, and Lauren Bacall. Ratings were high because this film was a hit in movie theaters in the USA in 1953. Of the 31 titles shown during this initial season, 15 were in color, and all were post-1948 Twentieth Century-Fox big-budget releases. All had their television premiere on “Saturday Night at the Movies.” The NBC television network had pioneered broadcasting in color and so especially liked the color titles. RCA, the pioneer in television color, owned NBC and used the network to spur sales of color television sets. By 1965 all TV presentations were shown in color, save the playing of older black-and-white movies.

After CBS and ABC saw how their shows (CBS's “Have Gun, Will Travel” and ABC's “Lawrence Welk”) fared poorly against NBC's “Saturday Night at the Movies,” they quickly moved to negotiate their own “nights at the movies,” which created a ratings boost. ABC, generally a distant third in the ratings during the 1960s, moved first. A mid-season replacement, “Sunday Night at the Movies,” commenced in April 1962. CBS, the longtime ratings leader in network television, remained aloof and did not set in place its own “Night at the Movies” until September 1965.



9.9 *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Jean Negulesco, 1953).

But with CBS joining the fray at the beginning of the 1965–1966 television season, the race was on. Television screenings of recent Hollywood movies became standard practice. High ratings were achieved with Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) in 1968 as nearly 40 percent of all television sets in use at the time tuned in. *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), shown in 1966, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), shown in 1967, achieved ratings almost as high. Clearly, recent feature films shown on television were as popular as anything the medium had to offer. Indeed, when *Gone with the Wind* (1939) was shown in two parts in early November of 1976, half the nation's television sets were tuned in.

By the fall of 1968, movies were shown every night of the week on the ABC, NBC, and CBS television networks. This success of the movie showings on the networks caused the number of "Late" and "Early" shows to fall by 25 percent. Stations not affiliated with one of the three television networks built their schedules around pre-1948 features. Films like *Casablanca* (1943) and *King Kong* (1933), spaced judiciously throughout the viewing year, would year-after-year draw large audiences. This unprecedented wave of movie programming quickly depleted the stock of attractive features which had not played on television. On the network television level, the rule was to run a post-1948 feature twice ("première" and "re-run") and then release it into syndication so that local stations could air it on for their "Late" or "Early" shows.

Soon there were too many scheduled movie showings on television and too few new films to fill the schedules. Hollywood knew this, and the studios began to charge higher and higher prices for television screenings. Million-dollar price tags became commonplace. For the widely heralded September 1966

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telecast of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), the Ford Motor Company put up nearly \$2 million as the sponsor. The film attracted some 60 million viewers against formidable competition.

TELEVISION MOVIES

TV network executives sought a way to create their own movies. They could closely track costs, and even use these TV movies to test new shows which might then be downsized to appear as regular series. Late in 1966 NBC contracted with Hollywood's Universal studio to develop a series of "World Première" TV movies. NBC stipulated that all films be in color, again to reinforce its leadership in manufacturing television sets. Once the TV movie was shown twice on a television network, rights reverted back to Universal, which could release the TV movies in theaters in the United States (a rare occurrence), then to foreign theaters (more common), and finally to US television stations for their "Early" and "Late" shows (a common occurrence). The initial entry, *Fame is the Name of the Game* (1966), starring minor luminaries Jill St. John and Tony Franciosa, was presented on a Saturday night in November 1966.

Thus, NBC led the way with the innovation of TV movies. Once ABC saw a successful trend, it followed close behind. Eventually CBS, having been successful with traditional series, started producing TV movies. TV movies took only five years to become a mainstay genre of American network television programming. By early in the 1970s, movies made for television outnumbered theatrical fare shown on the three networks.

A typical movie made for television cost three quarters of a million dollars, far less than what Hollywood was demanding for rental of its recent blockbusters. And the ratings were phenomenal. Few expected that millions upon millions would have tuned in for *The Waltons' Thanksgiving Story* (1973), *Night Stalker* (1972), *A Case of Rape* (1974), and *Women in Chains* (1972). Such fare regularly outdrew what were considered the biggest films of the era like *The Graduate* (1973 television première), *West Side Story* (1972 première on television), and *Goldfinger* (1972 première on television).

One TV movie in particular heralded the coming of age of movies-made-for-television. During the 1971–1972 television season the ABC "Movie of the Week" (all TV movies) was the fifth most-watched series of the year. On 30 November 1971 ABC presented a little publicized TV film, *Brian's Song*. One third of the households in the country watched, and half the people watching television that Tuesday night selected that movie about a football player who dies of cancer over the television fare on CBS and NBC.

This relatively inexpensive movie vaulted into tenth place on the list of *all-time* movie screenings on television. With the *The Wizard of Oz* accounting for five of the top ten ratings up to that November night, *Brian's Song* joined *The Birds* (1963), *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Ben-Hur* (1959), and *Born Free* (1966), demonstrating that TV movies could win **Emmys** (five), prestigious **George Foster Peabody Awards**, and citations from the National



9.10 *Brian's Song* (Buzz Kulik, 1971).

An Emmy Award is a US television prize awarded by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, first given out in 1949.

The George Foster Peabody Award is a US television prize awarded by the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, first presented in 1941, and named after the philanthropic banker and businessman George Foster Peabody (1852–1938).

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Cancer Society. When then President Richard M. Nixon declared *Brian's Song* one of his all-time favorite films, ABC reaped an unexpected publicity bonanza.

Brian's Song offered nothing special to distinguish it from the typical early ABC movies made for television. It cost less than a half million dollars to make: stock footage from National Football League games and unknown actors and actresses kept expenses at a minimum. Shooting lasted only two weeks. *Brian's Song* was shot as written, just as Hollywood had produced low-budget fare during the 1930s and 1940s.

The impact of the first-run of *Brian's Song* nearly equaled the publicity bonanza associated with a successful feature film. Books about the film's hero became best-sellers. The film's music moved onto *Billboard's* charts. ABC showed it a second time to equally high ratings. The success of *Brian's Song* sent a strong message to the three television networks. From then on, they prepared for unexpected hits, instituting publicity campaigns to take advantage of twists and turns in public opinion, even to shape it, as only theatrical films had done in the past. Longer mini-series and novels for television were innovated. The success of the TV movie proved that Americans had an almost insatiable desire to watch feature-length films, whatever their origin, on their home television sets.

THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM

The transformation of the USA into a land of suburbs, the innovation of wide-screen movies in color, and the integration of the film and television industries led to a reformation of the Hollywood studio system. Only one studio – RKO (see above) – failed and went out of the business of making new films.

All the other studios survived. Indeed, given the ups and downs of the business, they did fine. What changed were the rankings. The Big Five and the Little Three were no more. After RKO's fall, the remaining seven were equal. They all distributed films and found independent producers to make the films and all expanded into television. There was one new kid on the block, the Walt Disney operation. But despite all the changes, the new eight controlled the box-office just as tightly as had the pre-war majors.

MGM

MGM almost went out of business. Nicholas Schenck took over Loew's in 1927 and thereafter ruled the Loew's/MGM empire with an iron fist. Schenck had long relied on Louis B. Mayer to run the studio on the West Coast. During the 1930s Mayer did a fine job. The 1940s proved more problematic for a man who seemed more interested in developing race horses than movie stars; Mayer became less interested in managing MGM. So, in July of 1948, Schenck threw out Mayer and installed Dore Schary, a former writer, as head of production. Schary introduced more serious subjects to MGM's production schedule. For example, MGM released *Intruder in the Dust* (1949), *Quo Vadis* (1951), and *Ivanhoe* (1952), all based on famous novels. Schary struggled to find hits. By 1954 the studio had only one entry in the year's top-ten grossers, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954). Too often Schary's efforts lost millions. *Jupiter's Darling* (1955), starring Esther Williams, lost more than \$2 million; *Plymouth Adventure* (1952), starring Spencer Tracy and Gene Tierney, lost \$1.5 million.

Late in 1955, Schenck retired and his protégé Schary lasted only a few months more. This exodus set off a violent corporate struggle for power. After months of proxy fights and rumors, Arthur Loew, the son of Loew's founder, stepped forward from his long-held position as chief of international distribution to become

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president. However, Loew proved unsuited for the job and within a year gave way to veteran theater executive, Joseph Vogel.

Vogel took charge, but had to grapple with an outside takeover attempt, rather than being able to concentrate on making hit films. Joseph Tomlinson, a Canadian road builder, Stanley Meyer, a television producer, and Louis B. Mayer himself tried to wrest the company away. The result of the year-long struggle for power was that the once-mighty MGM was but a shell of its former self.



9.11 *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Richard Brooks, 1958).

During the late 1950s, hits emerged infrequently from unexpected sources. Elvis Presley starred in *Jailhouse Rock* (1957); longtime MGM favorite Elizabeth Taylor projected a new image in *Raintree County* (1957) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958). Vogel gambled \$15 million to re-make *Ben-Hur*, and it turned out to be the top-grossing film of 1960. Unfortunately Vogel also approved the \$30 million spent to remake *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962), and this massive failure at the box-office precipitated his ousting.

Vogel's successor was Wall Street executive Robert O'Brien. O'Brien approved the popular *Dr. Zhivago* (1965), directed by David Lean and starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie. Indeed, during his first three years at the helm, from 1963 through 1965, O'Brien did quite well. Earnings actually began to climb but soon calamity struck once again because of yet another outside takeover attempt lasting three years. O'Brien was able to rebuff this attempt only to lose the company in the end to Kirk Kerkorian (a former airline executive), who simply wanted the shell of a studio as a symbol for his new Las Vegas hotel.

In 1969 Kerkorian appointed James T. Aubrey, Jr., formerly with CBS, as MGM's chief of production. Aubrey immediately cancelled 15 films about to begin production, including the Carlo Ponti-Fred Zinnemann production of André Malraux's *Man's Fate*, which was scheduled to go before the cameras within days. In May of 1970, in a widely publicized action that then many interpreted (incorrectly it turned out) as a signal

of Hollywood's imminent demise, Aubrey supervised the sale of much of the famed MGM backlot and the thousands of props from by-gone MGM classics. He also disposed of MGM's studio in Great Britain, its theaters in Australia, South Africa, and Great Britain, and the MGM phonograph record subsidiary.

In the early 1970s under Aubrey, MGM turned to low-budget films. Some, like the blaxploitation film *Shaft* (1971), starring Richard Roundtree, made money. But this strategy (as well as other corporate maneuvers) did not help in the long-run. Once the sales were over, profits began to fall. In October 1973, just before he resigned, Aubrey took MGM out of movie distribution – the once-mighty Leo the Lion sat as the outsider of the Hollywood industry looking in. While many thereafter tried to revive MGM, they never did, and it has limped along at the margins of the Hollywood film industry ever since.

Warner Communications

In July 1956 founding brothers, Harry and Abe Warner, sold their share in Warner Bros. to a syndicate headed by Boston banker Serge Semenenko and New York investment banker Charles Allen, Jr. Jack Warner stayed on to help with the transition and then went on to become an independent producer. Their first transaction netted the new Warner Bros. owners several million dollars for distributing its pre-1948 feature films. With the production of the pioneering television series "77 Sunset Strip" and "Maverick," the former empty studio lot hummed once again.

But during the remainder of the 1950s and into the 1960s, Warner the movie company struggled, able to attract only a handful of hits from independent producers. In particular *Camelot* (1967) and *The Great Race* (1965) became big box-office successes. Risky ventures such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966) also made money. Even Jack Warner contributed a hit, the film version of *My Fair Lady* (1964). But together these efforts were not enough, and Warners' balance sheet moved into the red, making it susceptible to a takeover. Seven Arts Productions, Ltd. of Canada distributed Warner films to television stations, and gradually Seven Arts came to represent the only healthy part of the company. In 1966 Jack Warner retired and sold his share to Seven Arts, Inc. But this would not prove to be a long-term solution. In July of 1969 Kinney National Services, Inc., a New York conglomerate engaged in parking lots, car rental, construction and funeral homes, purchased Warner Bros.-Seven Arts. Steven Ross, son-in-law of Kinney's founder, not only picked up Warners and the Ted Ashley agency, he also acquired National Periodical Publications (comic book publishers of *Superman* and *Batman*), and Panavision, the manufacturer of lenses and camera equipment which were (and are) the standard in Hollywood. Ross wanted to create the ultimate media conglomerate and hired Ted Ashley to run the studio. He let go hundreds of employees and consolidated studio operations with Columbia Pictures. John Wayne's independent company, Batjac, settled at Warners. Ashley produced a string of successful films – *Deliverance* (1972), *What's Up Doc?* (1972), and *The Summer of '42* (1971) – and swelled corporate earnings.



9.12 Warner's biggest hit in 1973: *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973).

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The last cost only \$1 million to make but grossed more than 20 times that amount. The studio's biggest hit of the Ashley years proved to be the chilling *The Exorcist* (1973), based on William Peter Blatty's best-selling novel. As a division of Warner Communications, Warner Bros. the film operation settled into a period of consistent earnings.

It was Steve Ross who tempted filmmakers to the studio. He offered directors unprecedented control and access to Ross himself if a disagreement emerged. Ross considered and treated filmmakers as friends. And they in turn contributed significantly to Warner profits.

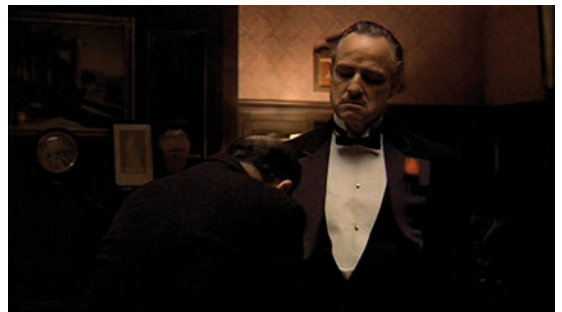
Paramount

United Paramount Theaters slowly transformed itself from a movie exhibitor to a television enterprise under former Barney Balaban aide, Leonard Goldenson. The new company sold the former Paramount theaters and used the cash to purchase the ailing ABC television network in 1952. Money from the sales of even more theaters was directly injected into the ABC network and television stations through the 1950s and 1960s. United Paramount Theaters became American Broadcasting/Paramount Theaters which in the 1960s became simply American Broadcasting Companies.

Paramount Pictures centered its operations at the studio in Los Angeles. Throughout the 1950s Paramount Pictures followed a fiscally conservative strategy. Barney Balaban, longtime corporate chief, kept a tight rein on budgets, always looking for ways to trim expenses and add to profits. For example, when Twentieth Century-Fox successfully innovated CinemaScope, Balaban countered with Paramount's less expensive VistaVision, a process which could be used on traditional projectors and thus required a smaller investment on the part of the exhibitor. Moreover, VistaVision enabled Paramount to keep pace with rivals using CinemaScope while never having to take out a license with and pay royalties to Twentieth Century-Fox.

But such skillful maneuvering did not work for long. While Paramount's top producer Hal Wallis contributed steady profits from such efforts as *Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957), starring Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas, and *Becket* (1964), starring Richard Burton and Peter O'Toole, it was a series of films starring Elvis Presley that were the most profitable in the history of the studio. Yet by 1963, it was clear that Hal Wallis could not save the studio. Paramount's accountants reported to Balaban the first lack of overall profits in the studio since the middle-1930s and the Great Depression.

Outsiders, seeing an undervalued enterprise, attempted to take over the company in a proxy fight. They pointed to such Balaban mistakes as selling rather than renting the pre-1948 films to television, underinvesting in television production, and failing to attract a consistent flow of films from independent producers. Rather than struggle on, Balaban retired in 1964, and immediately takeover attempts commenced. In the fall of 1966 a giant conglomerate, Charles Bluhdorn's Gulf + Western Industries, purchased Paramount. Bluhdorn installed himself as Paramount's president and hired former press agent Martin S. Davis to run things in New York and former actor Robert Evans to revitalize the studio in California.



9.13 *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972).

Evans increased film production and had the studio buy the adjacent lot. But disasters came early on, with such mega-budget failures as *Darling Lili* (1970), starring Rock Hudson and Julie Andrews, and *Paint Your Wagon* (1969), starring Clint Eastwood and Lee Marvin. These two spectacles drove Paramount further into the red. Slowly, the company reorganized and re-emerged as an industry leader, its comeback secured by the 1972 release of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*. For the first 26 days of release, *The Godfather* brought in an unheard of one million dollars per day. Paramount was back.

Twentieth Century-Fox

Twentieth Century-Fox began its transition to a new era in 1951. That year the company signed its court-ordered consent decree and began to spin off its theaters. For a time this new chain, National Theaters, still worked closely with Fox the movie maker because Spyros Skouras, the chief executive officer of Twentieth Century-Fox, worked closely with his brother Charles, who ran the new National Theaters chain. Generally during the 1950s Twentieth Century-Fox did well under Skouras' guidance. CinemaScope and Marilyn Monroe films led the way, as did newly established television operations.

When longtime studio boss, Darryl F. Zanuck, resigned in 1956 to enter independent production, the company seemed strong. Spyros Skouras tried out a number of replacements (most notably Buddy Adler) but none could match Zanuck's record. Soon Fox began to lose money. To help prop up the balance sheet, Skouras sold part of the famed back lot which was developed into Century City, an office building home to any number of Hollywood agents. The deal which climaxed as "Saturday Night at the Movies" also helped add needed cash.

But accounting losses swelled in 1963 with the bloated production and subsequent box-office debacle of *Cleopatra*, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Originally budgeted at \$2 million (not extravagant for that period), the cost escalated to a record \$30 million. To break even, at this cost, the film would have had to draw in more than \$75 million at the box-office. That meant *Cleopatra's* popularity would have to rival that of *Gone with the Wind*. It never even came close.

Anticipating the *Cleopatra* disaster, Spyros Skouras gracefully retired in July 1962. His replacement was none other than the longtime production boss of the company, Darryl F. Zanuck, who brought along his 27-year-old son, Richard, as his assistant. This choice surprised many since Zanuck had little luck as an independent producer; his *The Sun Also Rises* (1957) and *The Roots of Heaven* (1958) fared poorly at the box-office. Moreover, Zanuck had little experience in the crucial financial side of running a studio. But he was a major stockholder in the company and, many believed, the only realistic choice.

The Zanucks swept in, temporarily closing down the studio and laying off hundreds of workers, instantly saving millions of dollars. But running a studio in the 1960s proved far different than the management techniques Zanuck senior had used successfully during the 1930s and 1940s. *The Sound of Music* (1965) was only a temporary savior. Other multi-million dollar films like *Doctor Dolittle* (1967), *Star!* (1968), *Hello, Dolly!* (1969), and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) did not return their investments.

In 1970 Twentieth Century-Fox lost a record \$77 million. A corporate struggle ensued and the Zanucks (father and son), were ousted, just as the company seemed on the verge of having to declare bankruptcy. Luckily, there were several hits already in the pipeline, including *Patton* (1970) and *M*A*S*H* (1970). When Dennis Stanfill, a corporate banker, came on as chief operating officer, he hired Gordon Stulberg as production chief. This duo supervised such blockbusters as *The French Connection* (1971), *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), and *The Towering Inferno* (1973). Thus Fox was ready, in 1977, to fully exploit *Star Wars*

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and move to the top of the Hollywood studio hierarchy. Yet *Jaws* (issued by Universal in 1975, as shown below) would show Fox how to make a world-wide blockbuster. Steven Spielberg became the star director before George Lucas.

Columbia Pictures

MGM, Warners, Paramount, and Twentieth Century-Fox had to deal with jettisoning massive theater chains as they adjusted to the new Hollywood economics of the 1950s. However, smaller studios never owned theaters, and could plunge into the television age. Columbia Pictures reacted well and thus prospered during the 1950s. With the establishment in 1951 of its Screen Gems subsidiary to produce television series, Columbia began to back independent movie makers who sought a place to distribute their work. Producer-directors Sam Spiegel, David Lean, Elia Kazan, Otto Preminger, and Fred Zinnemann all found a home at Columbia and created such hits as *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *On the Waterfront* (1955), *The Caine Mutiny* (1954), and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957).

The Cohn brothers ruled Columbia until their deaths in 1956 (Jack) and 1958 (Harry). Abe Schneider and Leo Jaffe succeeded the Cohns, and under their leadership the company continued to prosper with such successes such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *A Man For All Seasons* (1966), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), *To Sir, With Love* (1967), *In Cold Blood* (1967), *Oliver!* (1968), and *Funny Girl* (1968). Ray Stark, producer of *Funny Girl*, became Columbia's main hit maker. The studio differentiated its products with low-budget British films such as *Georgy Girl* (1966) and Joseph Losey's *The Go-Between* (1971).

A flexible Columbia found hits in unexpected places. In 1969 Columbia released *Easy Rider*. This story of hip young Americans searching for meaning in the crazy world of the late 1960s cost less than a half million dollars to make, and grossed more than \$25 million. Bert Schneider, son of the head of the company at the time, had backed the film and was able to convince his father to pick up this independently made film starring Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper, and Peter Fonda. But much of the credit for Columbia's successes during the 1960s has to be credited to executive Mike Frankovich, who served as head of production from 1964 through 1968.

The 1970s were not kind to Columbia. The studio lost \$30 million in 1971, \$4 million the next year, and \$50 million in 1973. Cost cutting became the order of the day. In 1972 Columbia sold its studio lot and moved to share operations at Warner's Burbank studio. Columbia remained a viable entity but only became a Hollywood powerhouse again in 1980 when Coca-Cola took it over and injected much needed financial support.

United Artists

United Artists entered the 1950s in the worst shape of any major movie company and so founders Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford, still owning the majority of the stock, agreed to sell. In February 1951 a syndicate took charge, headed by two New York entertainment lawyers, Arthur Krim and Robert Benjamin. The two lawyers struck a unique bargain with Chaplin and Pickford. If new management could turn a profit in any one of its first three years of operation, Krim and Benjamin could then acquire controlling interest. Timing could not have been better for the New York *wunderkinds*. The new United Artists sought out independent producers and offered to provide world-wide distribution. Within the first year of operation Krim and Benjamin picked up Stanley Kramer's *High Noon* and John Huston's *The African Queen* for distribution in 1952.

Krim and Benjamin took United Artists, which had not earned a profit in nearly a decade, to the top of the movie business. Krim and Benjamin attracted the work of such stars as Burt Lancaster and Robert Mitchum. Later they worked out deals with Walter, Marvin and Harold Mirish to distribute the films of directors Billy Wilder, John Sturges, Robert Wise, and Otto Preminger. All liked the freedom and services the new United Artists offered. Benjamin and Krim handled the financing, distribution, and publicity, leaving the creative talents free to make movies.

Profits soared under the new management – averaging \$12 million per year in the 1960s. The “James Bond” series, produced by Albert Broccoli, commenced in 1962 with *Dr. No*. This series added millions to the United Artists’ profit sheets. Unlike all its major competitors, United Artists entered television in a limited way. Krim and Benjamin needed new films; while it sponsored Woody Allen, his films were hardly blockbusters.



9.14 Arthur Krim, United Artists.

Thus, in 1967 Krim and Benjamin cashed in on the conglomerate boom of the time, selling for a handsome profit to Transamerica Company. This giant San Francisco based insurance and financial services company had plenty of cash on hand and sought diversification. But the company could only develop a single set of blockbusters – the James Bond films. These always did well at the box-office, but one series of films does not make a studio. Krim and Benjamin stayed on to run the United Artists division, an arrangement which proved good for both sides until 1978 when Krim and Benjamin resigned, and United Artists was combined with the ailing MGM.

Disney

The one new player on the block was the Walt Disney Corporation. This studio had existed on the fringes of the American film industry since the 1920s, specializing in animation. But with the transition to the era of television, theaters cut off shorts and forced Disney to move into new arenas. In 1953 Disney formed its own distribution arm, Buena Vista. To fill this new channel, Disney began to commission and release non-animated films. Indeed, the first effort for the new Buena Vista was a documentary, *The Living Desert* (1953). Made for \$300,000, it quickly grossed more than \$1 million. Thereafter came live-action adventure films aimed at a family audience, including *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954) and the wildly successful *Mary Poppins* (1964). The final part of the Disney movie strategy included the regular releases of animated classics such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1938) and *Pinocchio* (1940).



9.15 Walt Disney, 1965.

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Davy Crockett (1786–1836) was an American pioneer of the “Wild West,” and member of the US House of Representatives. His persona inspired many legendary tales like the “Davy Crockett” television hit (1955–56) from Disney.

*Zorro was a big hit on US television in 1957. Zorro (Spanish for “fox”) was the masked hero first appearing in the serialized novel *The Curse of Capistrano* (1910), written by John McCulley, which since then has inspired many filmmakers, comic creators, and television producers.*

*Ma and Pa Kettle were comic characters played by Marjorie Main (Ma) and Percy Kilbride (Pa) that after their first appearance in *The Egg and I* (1947), based on Betty MacDonald’s best-selling novel of the same title, got their own very popular series of comic films.*

Walt Disney and his brother and partner Roy reasoned that the company would never make it solely as a film producer and distributor, so they branched out and entered the television business (and theme park business) in 1954. A struggling ABC television, under Leonard Goldenson, convinced Disney to create a weekly show. The program, under a number of names, including “The Wonderful World of Disney,” offered the company a way to advertise upcoming movies as well as its theme park. **Davy Crockett** and later **Zorro** were heavily promoted on television. The Disneyland theme park was opened in 1955 and was an instant hit, providing the bulk of corporate profits.

Disney continued to make movies after the founder’s death in 1968, but increasingly relied on the profits of its theme parks. During the 1970s the company made millions, but less and less from its movie operations. During the 1960s, after the release of *Mary Poppins*, the company was becoming less influential in the movie business, although it remained a power in the world of popular culture. The company never fully left the film business, and so when new management took over in the 1980s, Disney was able to leap back into the serious filmmaking fray, and even to the top of the industry. As the 1970s ended, Disney was the weakest of the Hollywood studios. It would take a new team of managers – led by Michael Eisner – to revive the company.

Universal

Universal was only a marginally profitable movie company during the Golden Age of the 1930s and 1940s. When the company was sold in 1952 to the Decca Records company, Edward Muhl became head of production and looked for independent deals in much the same way as United Artists and Columbia did. Jimmy Stewart came on board to create a number of fine westerns, all directed by Anthony Mann, including *Winchester ’73* (1950) and *Bend of the River* (1952).

Other stars lured to independent deals with Universal included Tyrone Power, Gregory Peck, and Alan Ladd. Universal still ground out low-budget series starring Percy Kilbride and Marjorie Main as “**Ma and Pa Kettle**,” and Donald O’Connor playing opposite **Francis the Talking Mule**. But in the 1950s the shining light of the studio proved to come from the efforts of producer Ross Hunter. His melodramatic fare made consistent money: *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Imitation of Life* (1959), and *The Tarnished Angels* (1958), all directed by Douglas Sirk (see Chapter 10). Hunter was also responsible for the successful Doris Day–Rock Hudson comedies of this era.

But in 1958 Universal’s fortunes took a turn into the red. A year later the MCA talent agency acquired the Universal back lot, and three years later, the whole company. Under government pressure of an anti-monopoly suit, MCA spun off its talent agency and moved into the movie business full time. Under Lew Wasserman, Universal became a powerhouse of television production. Universal crafted its famous and highly profitable tour of the backlot as a rival to Disneyland. The attractions seen on the studio tour had little to do with the actual production of films or television programs, but they drew millions of fans and skillfully promoted upcoming Universal films and television programs.

Wasserman made peace with television. The new studio lot in Universal City encompassed both film and TV production. The making of TV shows for TV networks in the USA centered at Universal more than any other studio. Wasserman saw this as a steady base of revenues and profits. Films were riskier and so Wasserman went for safe methods. First he hired proven directors, such as former MCA client Alfred Hitchcock. No one doubted Hitchcock’s ability to draw audiences and in the early 1960s Hitchcock made some of his greatest films, including *The Birds* (1963) and *Marnie* (1964).

Wasserman also took some chances: Clint Eastwood contributed *High Plains Drifter* (1973), and a young George Lucas made *American Graffiti* in 1973. The Mirish brothers, Robert Wise, Richard Zanuck, and David Brown all left other studios to join Universal. This gave Wasserman a base of top film producers who took fewer chances by producing films of best-selling books. In 1974 the book *Jaws* spent 44 weeks on the best-seller lists. Wasserman immediately purchased the movie rights from author Robert Benchley. Then Wasserman hired Richard Zanuck, son of longtime boss at Twentieth Century-Fox Darryl F. Zanuck, and his partner producer David Brown to take charge of making a film of the best seller. To cut costs they hired a young director already under contract – Steven Spielberg. By the time Universal released *Jaws* in June 1975, MCA-Universal had the first true blockbuster. Wasserman advertised on every TV show shown in prime time before the Friday release. Within a month only *Gone with the Wind* still outranked *Jaws* in total movie revenues. The blockbuster era had started.



9.16 Lew Wasserman, and with Alfred Hitchcock and Steven Spielberg.

Francis the Talking Mule was a popular animal character based on the novels of Peter Stern that appeared in seven comic films. Actor Chill Wills (1903–1978) voiced the mule.

Joseph Burstyn (1900–1953) was a Polish-born US importer and distributor of foreign films including *The Miracle*; *Wilson* was named as the defendant as the chair of the New York state censorship board.

The Miracle is a short film that tells the story of a seduced peasant woman (played by Anna Magnani) who believes she will give birth to a divine baby. Together with *A Human Voice* (Una voce umana), *The Miracle* formed a two-part film called *Love* (L'Amore, 1948).

HOLLYWOOD AS A CHANGING SOCIAL FORCE

The social impact of the movies in America changed significantly during the television age. Young people in the USA between the ages of 12 and 30, the baby boomers, came to dominate the theatrical audience; and, consequently, their expectations and desires increasingly influenced the types of films released. College students began to embrace films as an art form. In the two decades after World War II, movies in America came to be seen not just as a mass entertainment form, but also as an art form to be studied and analyzed in the same way that music, literature, painting, and dance had been for centuries.

The potential for this new audience was recognized by Columbia University social scientist Paul Lazerfeld as early as 1947. He argued that age had long been the most important variable for understanding the composition of the movie audience. Younger people went to the movie theater at twice the rate as middle-aged folks. Movie opinion leaders, those fans who spread the news by “word-of-mouth,” had always been well-educated young people.

To recapture more serious college-age film-goers, Hollywood loosened censorship standards. The strict code of censorship so powerfully self-enforced during the 1930s and 1940s broke down. Movies became more and more of an open medium. Television took its place as the more restricted “family” entertainment. On 26 May 1952 the United Supreme Court announced its decision in the case officially known as *Burstyn v. Wilson*. This case, dealing with the presentation of Roberto Rossellini’s *The Miracle* (*Il miracolo*, 1948), established for the first time a constitutional basis for challenging the rulings of state and local censorship boards. It declared that motion pictures should be treated as “a significant medium for the communication of ideas.” With this ruling, the US Supreme Court granted movies the same status as magazines, newspapers,

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and other means of speech protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. In the decade after *Burstyn*, the US Supreme Court heard six movie censorship cases and, with each ruling, the powers of the censors were further reduced. Social reformers then targeted television.

In November 1968 the United States became the last major Western nation to have some kind of systematic age classification of motion pictures: “G” denotes suitability for general audiences; “PG” suggests parental guidance; “R” is restricted to persons under 17 unless accompanied by an adult, and “X” says no one under 17 will be admitted. Jack Valenti, the head of the Motion Picture Producers Association of America, developed and publicized this rating system. Most films tend to get a “PG” or “R” since they are expected to mean adult fare, not to be found on network television. There are regular disputes, but they usually only serve to heighten box-office interest.

By the late 1960s, the movies from Hollywood had come to an altogether new plateau, one which elevated some films into the category of art. Film began to be analyzed by serious critics and taught in universities where students studied the classics as they would the great works of literature. Indeed, movies replaced the novel as the dominant arbiter of social mores and cultural trends among the best educated members of society. As the television set took up the place as the mass popular form, filmmaking began to acquire a special niche in American culture, and film-as-art became the password.

A new economics and sociology of Hollywood was in play by 1975, the beginning of our contemporary age. This transformation did not mean great changes in the films Hollywood made. Indeed, the form and style of the classic Hollywood film remained firmly intact, even with the rise of wide-screen films in color and the advent of television. But genres changed, new filmmakers entered the system, and Hollywood moved from studio production to a mode of independent production. But the television era did permit an opening, and so for the first time a serious documentary and underground film movement emerged in the USA.



9.17 Movie Rating System, 1986.

CASE STUDY 9

FILM SOCIETIES AS ALTERNATIVE SPACES FOR MOVIE EXHIBITION

After the Second World War in the USA, movie houses closed, but a small loyal audience developed for older films which the studios had released on 16mm. As universities did not offer film courses – following European models – educated movie fans in the USA formed film societies that presented movie classics from the past.



9.18 Amos Vogel.

Film societies not only presented movies but produced notes for distribution before or after their screenings, presented in non-theatrical spaces, hung posters in the neighborhood of the screening space, and even penned and published essays. A common feature that characterized these film society screenings was an introduction of the movie to the audience, and an announcement of forthcoming screenings.

In 1947 Amos Vogel created “Cinema 16,” in New York City, and soon became famous across the USA for his projection of experimental films and documentaries. “Cinema 16” also championed documentaries, but had no interest in Hollywood film. Vogel did not consider any film made in Hollywood an artistic work.

Also in New York City, Theodore Huff organized fans of silent films, and Huff’s film society became a movable feast, using different spaces in the New York City area for \$1 per screening twice a month. The core trait of film societies was their non-profit status. As long as film societies remained non-profit, Hollywood and distributors of foreign films ignored film societies. Through the 1950s and 1960s the film society movement spread across the USA.

For example, in Madison, Wisconsin, home to 30,000 students, the Wisconsin Film Society started and thrived. Graduate students and undergraduates cooperated to enable the Wisconsin Film Society to screen classics and films from abroad once a week during each term. By the early 1960s, the Wisconsin Film Society was so active that it was publishing its own books. By 1971, a group of 20 students not only ran the Wisconsin Film Society, but created the Arizona Jim Film Co-op, to publish a student-run magazine *The Velvet Light Trap* (now published by the University of Texas Press).

The Wisconsin Film Society became the campus center for social activity. The daily student-run campus newspaper published a column called “Screen Gems” – to alert fans to the two-dozen screenings each week, highlighting not only the Wisconsin Film Society screening, but those from 25 other film societies that filled campus classrooms. The campus was dotted with home-made movie posters. With more than two-dozen film societies the fare was fabulously eclectic – everything from Charlie Chaplin’s *City Lights* (1931) to Ingmar Bergman’s *Wild Strawberries* (1957), from Howard Hawks’ *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), to Alfred Hitchcock’s *Notorious* (1946).

The Wisconsin Film Society served as the social-cultural center of the campus. All those who helped out had a say in what would show up on forthcoming schedules. Debate was heated. The campus was home to more film societies than any community its size in the USA. It defined a Golden Age of movie-going in Madison, Wisconsin, from the 1950s through the 1980s.

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CHAPTER 10

A TRANSFORMATION OF HOLLYWOOD MOVIE MAKING

Introduction

The stability of the Classical Hollywood system

New and old directors working in Hollywood genres

Recycling Hollywood's genres

The western

Film noir

The musical

Comedies

Melodrama

“New” genres of the 1960s

The blockbuster

*Case study 10: A critic who changed the status of
Hollywood movies*

INTRODUCTION

During the 1950s and 1960s filmmakers incorporated the new technologies Hollywood had adopted in their films. By following the Classical rules, old-line directors reached the crest of their directorial powers making movies in color for wide-screens. Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, and Howard Hawks made some of the most complex Hollywood movies. New movie makers came to Hollywood from New York stage and television work. Sidney Lumet, Franklin Schaffner, and Stanley Kubrick experimented on the margins of the still dominant Classical Hollywood Narrative Style.

A second change was that other genres became popular. Suddenly the western became the dominant story form from Hollywood. John Ford and Anthony Mann made movies that were both popular and then later re-discovered as masterworks. Another genre that flourished was the film noir portraying the darker side of society in for example the films of Fritz Lang and Sam Fuller. But also the movie musical with its optimistic tone reached a peak of unparalleled success. Comedies of wit and manners dealt with changing mores in post-World War II society in the USA. For example, director Frank Tashlin made comedies about comedies, filled with references to other movies and popular culture. Douglas Sirk, a native of Germany, did the same thing for the melodrama. But in the end, the new studios concentrated on films of spectacle – called the blockbuster for their unprecedented popularity.

The innovation of the blockbuster gave Hollywood cinema a new method to counter the growing number of films shown on TV. With the creation of *Jaws* in 1975, Hollywood filmmakers took traditional genres and added spectacle to them, to offer something new to an audience that had access to free TV presentations of movies but which were continuously interrupted and not shown in a wide-screen system.

During the 1950s to the mid-1970s the director became an artist, recognized and praised as the center of the creative process. He or she would be considered an “auteur” (author) of a film feature in a way analogous to an author who created a novel or a composer created a piece of music. And the director’s name began to regularly come before the title. As the era of transformation of the Hollywood feature film’s history closed in 1977, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg had become the cultural idols of a generation in the same way novelists had been only two decades earlier in the USA.

Yet upon closer examination both directors looked backward and were inspired in their filmmaking by the genres of the past. Science fiction and horror films were the inspirations for *Star Wars* and *Jaws*. The Classical Hollywood style of filmmaking was never challenged – only expanded in scope of production as feature filmmaking became more and more expensive. Thus, the best way to understand Hollywood feature filmmaking of the television era (1950–1977) is to closely examine the changes in popularity and to analyze the models of the Hollywood film genres created by an old generation of directors, admired by “movie brats” Steven Spielberg and George Lucas.

THE STABILITY OF THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD SYSTEM

Hollywood continued to construct its feature films around principles which had been in place for more than 30 years. For example, Hollywood’s use of color by Technicolor was almost entirely motivated by genre conventions and thus was identified with the musical, tales of adventure, stories of romance, and films of fantasy. These four genres of spectacle offered easily followed stories – signaling no break from the story-telling techniques that had defined Hollywood since the 1920s. Through the 1950s, Hollywood filmmakers differentiated their new films with color – to lure audiences away from black-and-white TV. Try to imagine

The Wizard of Oz (1939) without the fantasy world of color contrasted with the stark black-and-white images of Kansas. At first color was restricted to specified generic uses; only by the late 1960s were most Hollywood films released in color.

Hollywood producers postulated that color should add to, not distract from, the sweep of the story so that certain filmic elements needed to be re-invented. For example, the rendering of the human complexion was made to look “natural” – not look artificial – with the development of new make-up from Max Factor. To highlight stars, directors kept backgrounds in soft focus. But in the end the make-up and focus was always used to better tell a story.

During the 1950s, as color became widespread, expert directors of the past – the John Fords, the Alfred Hitchcocks – began to experiment with other uses, and in a short time produced many of the most complex and popular films. Ford made westerns in glowing color as that genre prospered in the 1950s. Many critics of the present day consider his western starring John Wayne – *The Searchers* (1956) – the greatest film ever made. Hitchcock made his suspense thrillers in color as in the case of *Rear Window* (1954).

As analyzed in Chapter 9, more challenging was Hollywood’s innovation of wide-screen images, although it took less time to standardize than color. By 1960, wide-screen color films were the new look of Hollywood feature filmmaking – aiming to offer something more sensational than could be found on television. At first, wide-screen processes were closely associated with a particular set of genres, those associated with sweep and grandeur. Early on came travelogues (*This is Cinerama*, 1952); 3-D used horror stories (*House of Wax*, 1953). But Cinerama and 3-D both failed as the systems required special projectors – and in the case of 3-D special glasses for viewers.

Hollywood studio owners looked to a standardized process. They did not want to make films in a special process that could only be used in a few dozen theaters. This came with Panavision that produced lenses that could adapt to any system of wide-screen filmmaking and projection and thus effectively ended experimentation by 1960. The Panavision lenses gave better depth of field and enabled filmmakers to return to the traditional style of the Classical Hollywood cinema.

Television altered the way Hollywood made movies; indeed if anything it forced feature filmmaking style to become simpler. The center of the frame (for both wide-screen images and television ones) became the focus of all but the least important of narrative actions. All significant information had to be centered so it could be later seen on a small television set. Narrative continuity had to be so tight that a viewer could go out of the room and return moments later, still understanding the story. Story-telling in the age of television had to be constructed so as to accommodate interruptions – as the ultimate market became showings on advertising-supported television in the USA.



10.1 Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939). The film changes from black and white to color and from color to black and white.

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TV stations and networks would resort to a pan-and-scan system – re-cutting the film to center frame all key action – if too much crucial story information occurred on the edge of the wide-screen frame. That is, TV stations and networks would re-cut the film so that wide shots with key characters on the edges would be seen as a series of close-ups of each character in single shots.

Hollywood's characters in the wide-screen Classical cinema style of filmmaking had to be well defined, operating with clear-cut traits and characteristics in the story. In contrast European art cinema allowed characters to be confused and lack clear-cut goals in the story. The Hollywood system did not allow this lack of clarity. Hollywood filmmakers borrowed what they could. For example, jump cuts – made popular by the French New Wave – were adapted to give a new look to comedies and sequences of violence as the editing could be discontinuous for a short sequence. A jump cut is defined as two sequential shots of the same subject taken from camera positions that vary only slightly. This type of edit causes the subject of the shots to appear to “jump” position in a discontinuous way. For this reason, jump cuts are considered a violation of classical continuity editing that an audience could easily follow. Continuity editing uses a guideline called “the 30-degree rule” that requires for any consecutive shots, the camera position vary at least 30 degrees away from the previous positioning. Generally, if the camera position changes 30 degrees or more, the spectator experiences the edit as a continuous change in camera angle rather than a discontinuous jump.

In short, only a slight transformation of the long-held Hollywood system of Classical Style filmmaking was allowed by the studios because this is what the audience understood from its continual use on television in the USA. The studio heads would not finance and distribute any film that set itself up as idiosyncratic – that is, notably “different” from the tenets of the Classical Hollywood Style of filmmaking. The mass audience could still understand these *slightly* different looking films. The Classical Hollywood system of filmmaking – with its continuity of time and space – remained in force.

NEW AND OLD DIRECTORS WORKING IN HOLLYWOOD GENRES

The Hollywood studio system of the 1950s and 1960s forced experienced directors, who in many cases, had been at work since the days of the silent cinema, to adapt again – as they had with the coming of talkies. The 1950s and early 1960s signaled the end of the careers of many, including such influential old-timers as Cecil B. DeMille, Frank Capra, and King Vidor. DeMille, who had directed his first film in 1914, continued to make popular films such as *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) and *The Ten Commandments* (1956). But critics noticed a considerable decline in the complexity and polish of his films. The same was true for Capra and Vidor. Frank Capra, who had directed his first film in 1926, continued – but with marginal box-office efforts including the delightful *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *Pocketful of Miracles* (1961). King Vidor had begun in 1919. His post-World War II films, including *The Fountainhead* (1949) and *War and Peace* (1956), only reminded many that his best work had been done two decades earlier.

At the box-office and in the Hollywood community probably the most successful of these old timers from the 1930s was a former director of two-reel westerns for Universal, William Wyler. Wyler was noted for his adaptations of popular novels and plays, principally for producer Sam Goldwyn: *Dodsworth* (1936), *These Three* (1936), *Dead End* (1937), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *The Little Foxes* (1941), and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). His continuing achievements enabled Wyler to form his own company and strike out on his own. Wyler's *The Heiress* (1949), *Roman Holiday* (1953), *Friendly Persuasion* (1955), and *Ben-Hur* (1959) reaped Oscars and millions of dollars. Critics praised his offbeat work in *The Children's Hour* (1961) and *The Collector* (1965). Wyler's work in the television era certainly does not rank with the best of Hitchcock

or Ford, but to the movie-going public of the time, William Wyler represented a much publicized filmmaker as his *Ben-Hur* won a record number of Oscars.

Wyler certainly was not the lone talented craftsman still at work. Some like Charlie Chaplin and Victor Fleming only made a handful of films after the Second World War. Chaplin's *Limelight* (1952), a nostalgic look at pantomime comedy of yesteryear, and Fleming's *Joan of Arc* (1948) represented probably the most famous work of this collection of Hollywood filmmakers whose careers dated back to the early 1910s.

Some directors like for example Michael Curtiz continued working until they died. With *Casablanca* (1943), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), and so many other Warner Bros.' classics, Curtiz represented the ultimate Hollywood insider, largely unknown to the public. After the Second World War, Curtiz continued directing at Warner Bros.: *Mildred Pierce* (1945), the award-winning film noir tale of death and greed, starring Joan Crawford; *White Christmas* (1954), a musical for Paramount, starring Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye; *King Creole* (1958) for his old mentor, producer Hal Wallis, starring the new rock 'n' roll teen idol, Elvis Presley. Curtiz died of cancer only a few months after completing *The Comancheros* (1961), starring John Wayne.

Other directors also worked into their seventies. Henry King retired in 1962, at age 74. In the 1950s he directed *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952) and *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* (1955). His final film was *Tender is the Night* (1962). George Stevens, Raoul Walsh, William Wellman, and Billy Wilder all continued to make films. Two veterans of the film business topped this list because they crafted their best work during the 1950s: Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks.

Alfred Hitchcock directed an impressive list of films after the Second World War: *Notorious* (1946), *Rope* (1948), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *Rear Window* (1954), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1955), *Vertigo* (1958), *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963), and *Marnie* (1964), among others. Hitchcock produced his best work through the 1950s into the early 1960s. Hitchcock also moved directly into television, crafting a popular TV series called "Alfred Hitchcock Presents." He arguably became the most famous director in the United States, if not the world. Hitchcock represented the rare filmmaker who was able to craft masterworks of the cinema while retaining popularity with movie fans at large.

For example, for *Notorious*, Hitchcock's first film after the Second World War, celebrated French filmmaker-critic François Truffaut argued that here was "the very quintessence of Hitchcock," "a maximum of stylization and a maximum of simplicity," "a great film." Thus the French New Wave (as will be analyzed in Chapter 11) was inspired by the very master of the Classical Hollywood system of filmmaking.

Hitchcock's *Rope* has long been celebrated as one of the most involved, complex technical exercises in Hollywood history. Not content with shooting in color for the first time, Hitchcock decided to film the 80-minute picture in seemingly one continuous take – with no cuts. No camera could hold the required 80-minutes of film, so at the end of each standard reel, Hitchcock tracked to a dark surface, changed the reel, and then moved out again to begin the action once again. The intricate logistics of each ten-minute take were carefully planned and exhaustively rehearsed, with furniture and walls moved to accommodate actresses, actors, and action. While the film is brilliant as a technical exercise, the story suffered. Hitchcock acknowledged placing technique over telling the story: "I undertook *Rope* as a stunt ..." Most importantly, *Rope* was a box-office failure. Hitchcock taught a generation not to stray too far from the Classical Hollywood system of filmmaking.

Hitchcock would not make that mistake again. The 11 films he made between 1951 and 1960 certainly rank among his finest. During this period, Hitchcock consolidated his public image as the "Master of

Suspense.” Year after year he was able to draw in millions of fans through his skillful re-working of the theme of the individual entangled in events beyond his or her control or even comprehension. Hitchcock seemed to be in touch with the 1950s as he explored and filmed stories of which a seemingly innocent central character suffered from teeming insecurities below a surface of contented prosperity in the USA.

For example, Hitchcock’s *Strangers on a Train* (1951) played with an intricate pattern of doubling and parallels between an obsessive man who sought to murder his father, and a tennis player who desired to divorce his first wife so that he could remarry. The “normal” tennis player and the psychopathic murderer frequently seem to have a great deal in common, and indeed are linked from the beginning of the film by shots of just their shoes arriving at Washington’s Union Station. The success of *Strangers on a Train* restored Hitchcock’s reputation as a popular Hollywood storyteller. It enabled him to become his own producer, and thus for the rest of his career approve the final cut of his filmmaking.

In *Rear Window* (1954) Hitchcock again took up a technical challenge, but this time it was carefully embedded within a story of voyeurism and paranoia. Confining his camera to the point of view of Scotty (Jimmy Stewart) in his apartment with a broken leg, Hitchcock crafted a suspenseful tale of murder with moments of black humor. Bored and frustrated, Scotty begins to spy on his neighbors. In the process, Hitchcock made a film about looking and filmmaking itself. *Rear Window* was celebrated by critics and proved a success at the box-office.

At this point Hitchcock threw himself wholeheartedly into television production as well as continuing active movie making. In October 1955, the first “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” appeared on the CBS television network, and the series ran for a decade. Of the approximately 350 episodes, Hitchcock only directed 20, but he introduced them all, and his wry prologues and epilogues, delivered in a deadpan style to identifiable theme music (Gounod’s “Funeral March of a Marionette”), made this movie maker a national celebrity, with his own widely selling magazine and fan club.

Hitchcock was at a high-point in his career and was able to combine all these activities. His masterworks of the cinema appeared regularly and his TV series made him a household name in the USA. In 1956, Hitchcock remade *The Man Who Knew Too Much* with two of the biggest stars in Hollywood at the time: Doris Day and Jimmy Stewart. *Psycho* (1960) is another example of complex editing. On the surface it appeared to be a cheaply made, black-and-white effort which was shrewdly promoted. *Psycho* is now considered a classic of its genre, one of the great examples of Classical Hollywood filmmaking of its time.

Vertigo (1958), again with Stewart, this time with Kim Novak, has become even more famous and revered. Some argue it belongs in any list of the most important films ever made. With its stark, haunting images suggesting drifting moods, obsessions and hallucinatory states of mind, *Vertigo* has been interpreted and



10.2 Shots from *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954). The window of the film title through which the main character sees a crime happening.

praised by critics as a complex cinematic work. *The Birds* (1963) and *Marnie* (1964) proved Hitchcock had not lost his touch as he moved into the 1960s. In these two popular efforts, Hitchcock played out his by now familiar themes of guilt and paranoia, with expected stylistic flourishes of rapid editing, subtle camera movements, and carefully chosen mise-en-scène.

Howard Hawks also made great films in the 1950s and 1960s, in a number of different film genres after the Second World War. He directed complex, elegant westerns (*Red River* – 1948, *Rio Bravo* – 1959, *El Dorado* – 1966, and *Rio Lobo* – 1970, his final film), hilarious comedies (*Monkey Business*, 1952), gripping adventure tales (*Hatari!*, 1962), and even lavish musicals (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, 1953). Through the 1950s and 1960s Hawks worked with some of the film industry's best known stars: John Wayne, Montgomery Clift, and Marilyn Monroe. Fans of the day flocked to his work, little realizing that these were the works of a cinema giant, who had labored in Hollywood since the days of silent cinema. Like Hitchcock, although less famous to the general public at large, Howard Hawks did his best work in the 1950s and 1960s.

This period marked Hawks' "John Wayne" period. In *Red River* (1948) Wayne took on one of his first complex roles. In this tale of one of the first long successful **cattle drives**, Hawks (with John Ford) helped shaped the essential John Wayne persona – a man of honor and courage, faithful to ideals. Wayne would be the centerpiece of Hawks' trilogy of *Rio Bravo*, *El Dorado*, and *Rio Lobo*. *Rio Bravo* represents one of the most celebrated westerns ever made. This is a western about westerns, what critics call a meta-western.

Rio Bravo stands as a supreme achievement of the complexity possible using the Classical Hollywood system of making movies. As a western, it was popular and made lots of money. It is filled with the conventional western genre archetypes – including the infallible sheriff, the lady with a shady past, the handsome "sidekick," and the comic character. Hawks carefully employed the Classical Hollywood filmmaking style to fashion "great" performances from Angie Dickinson, Dean Martin, and Ricky Nelson, never usually thought of as skillful actors. *Rio Bravo* stands as an example of the Hawks' archetypal film story in which a band of independent men form a bond to help a town recovering from domination of evil capitalists, and returning to civilization.

Howard Hawks in the 1950s and 1960s represented the most "Hollywood" of Hollywood directors. He understood the rules so well that he could mold films which flowed so smoothly, so "naturally" that one could forget that they were actually movies. He made genre films that proved so complex that critics spent decades unraveling them, yet audiences embraced them because of their surface qualities of story-telling and top



10.3 Jimmy Stewart showing his fear of heights (1-2) and Kim Novak (3) in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

Cattle drives were a major economic activity in the West of the US, in particular between 1866 and 1886, when Texan cattle owners moved their cattle to be sold in other towns. Horse riding cowboys led the cattle on their long journey.



10.4 *El Dorado* (Howard Hawks, 1966).

stars. It was Hawks of the 1950s in general, and *Rio Bravo* in particular, which inspired the Hollywoodization of the *auteur* theory, which will be analyzed in Chapter 11. Hawks presented an example of a director who was well within the Hollywood mainstream who still could create brilliant, personal visions, working and re-working the same themes and forms over and over again. Today it is viewed as a classic text of film history.

As time passed in the era of television, new directors were needed to direct Hollywood's feature film production. There simply were not enough old timers hanging on. One clear-cut avenue for entry into the ranks of directing started in New York in the world of live television. Sometimes new talents moved overnight to Hollywood; more often they labored to establish themselves in television and then a select handful were called to California.

Sidney Lumet provides a quintessential example of the television director becoming a feature filmmaker. A product of the Yiddish theater of New York City, Lumet began his show-business career as an actor, and then moved into directing. In 1950 he was offered a position as an assistant director at CBS television, and along with counterparts who later directed in Hollywood – Franklin Schaffner, John Frankenheimer, Robert Mulligan, Martin Ritt, Delbert Mann, and George Roy Hill. Lumet adopted a television script for his first feature, *12 Angry Men* (1957). *12 Angry Men* proved a commercial and critical success, earning Lumet an Oscar nomination. His career in Hollywood was off and running.

Lumet would become famous for his adaptations of plays into films, for example, Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* in 1962 and Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* the year before. Although Lumet preferred to operate from a base in New York City, ever disdainful of the Hollywood scene, he became a mainstream director in the Hollywood film industry of the 1960s. His most successful box-office attractions included *Fail Safe* (1964), *The Pawnbroker* (1965), and *Serpico* (1974). Indeed his career seems to have been caught in the contradiction of wanting to provide an alternative to the Hollywood genre film in terms of a theme of gripping realism (which he generally did), while never veering away from the confines of the Classical Hollywood style of filmmaking.

Franklin Schaffner provides yet another example of a director who made the jump from live television of the 1950s to feature filmmaking in the 1960s. Through the 1950s, Schaffner worked on "Studio One" (1948–1958), and "Playhouse 90" (1956–1961) for the CBS television network. He then moved to Hollywood and sought to do serious work there. But, save for efforts like *Patton* (1970), his artistic films generated precious little return at the box-office. Schaffner's lighter fare, including the original *Planet of the Apes* (1968), made far more money. Schaffner will be longer remembered for his efforts in early television than his struggles in Hollywood. Schaffner represents the typical case, the skillful craftsman, wedded to the New York aesthetic of the actor and performance rather than embracing the Classical Hollywood system of filmmaking. Only when imposed from above, by a strong producer, were Schaffner and his compatriots able to make works as successful as a Howard Hawks or an Alfred Hitchcock film.

Stanley Kubrick provides the exception to this rule about New York trained and based directors. Always an outsider, Kubrick worked first in the visual arts, not in television but as a photographer. Kubrick typified the case of the rebel who was able to work within the system but still retain a measure of independence. Blending influences from Europe and his own vision of the Hollywood spectacle, Kubrick was able to gain control over his own films. One significant hit was *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

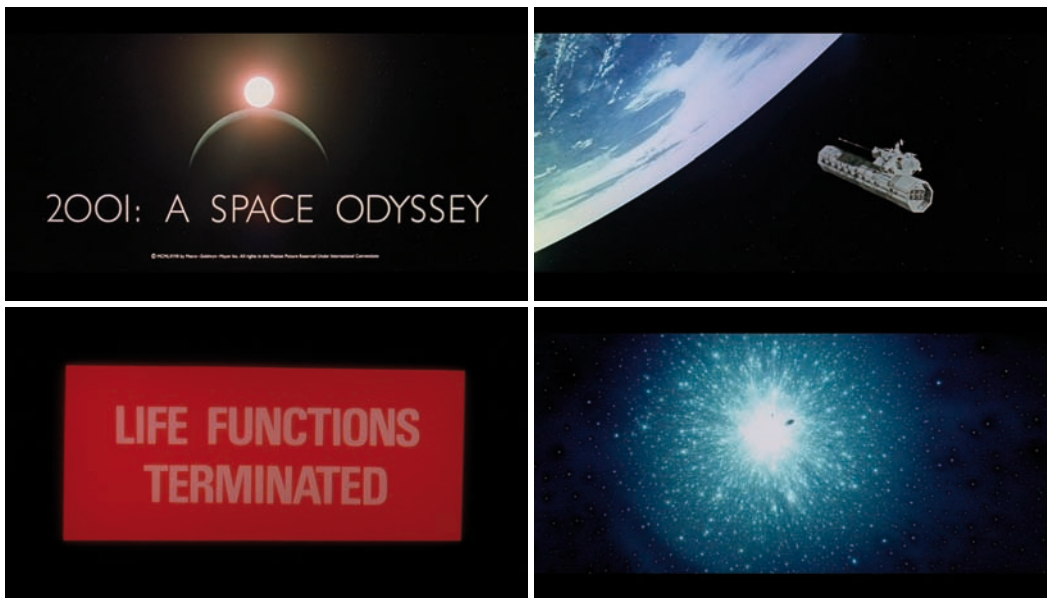
Kubrick moved from the still image to the moving image by making two documentary shorts and two low-budget features, all in the early 1950s. Therein he learned his craft. In 1955 he met James Harris,

an aspiring producer, and together they created *The Killing* (1956), a classy crime film about a group of small-time crooks who rob a race track only to see their money blow away at the end. Their *Paths of Glory* (1957) offered an uncompromising anti-war film, made at the height of the 1950s **anti-communist paranoia**. This led the way to the famous dark humor of 1960s Kubrick: *Lolita* (1962), and *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). These two films attacked the sexual mores and war interests of Americans just as the liberal era of **the 1960s** was beginning.

Anti-communist paranoia

The fear of leftists and communists created in the 1950s by US senator Joseph McCarthy who accused several prominent Americans of being secret spies of the (former) Soviet Union. He also launched investigations against supposed “subversive (against the state) activities” of politically left oriented Americans.

The 1960s was a tumultuous period in the history of Europe and the US characterized by numerous political protest movements, counter-cultures, avant-garde art movements, experiments in drug using, and the start of the sexual revolution that heralded more libertarian morals.



10.5 Shots from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968). The abstract title *2001* indicates that the film will be about outer space but in a new way.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) was an overwhelming and complex film attractive to a new film generation. More than any other work of its day, *2001* signaled that Hollywood could learn to appeal to a younger, television-reared audience. But then Kubrick returned to his darker-edged, biting examinations of the plight of mankind. *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and *The Shining* (1980) are more remembered for their use of music and striking visual moments than any unified view of the world, or alternative film style. Like many (including the bulk of the New York-based directors) Kubrick sought to combine the style of European art cinema with Hollywood, and was never able to circumvent the contradictions in that task. Kubrick is best remembered as an updated Orson Welles, able to achieve a touch of great cinema but never able to consistently deliver money-making films.

There were other ways to become a director in the 1950s and 1960s. It was possible to enter Hollywood from the inside – making serious films to rival those being imported from Europe.



10.6 Otto Preminger on the set of *Advise and Consent*, 1962.

Otto Preminger was famous for his social provocation as he dealt openly with virginity and the use of drugs in such works as *The Moon Is Blue* (1953) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955). Preminger, with an idiosyncratic style emphasizing the long take, reached the high point of his fame with an all-black cast in the highly controversial *Carmen Jones* (1954) and tales of power and politics with *Advise and Consent* (1962). He even challenged the Roman Catholic Church in *The Cardinal* (1964).

John Huston became Hollywood's serious, "art-house" director. In the early 1950s Huston, with Sam Spiegel, founded Horizon Films, after finishing obligations for Warner Bros. and MGM. He then directed *The African Queen* (1951) which established him as a "new, hot talent." Taken from C. S. Forester's novel, adapted by writer James Agee, and starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, *The African Queen* told a bitter-sweet love story set in Africa at the outbreak of the First World War. Huston then moved to intellectual subjects with *Moby Dick* (1956) and *Freud* (1962). Although all



10.7 John Huston directing *Moby Dick*, 1956.

these strained to make serious statements, they rigorously followed the filmmaking rules of the Classical Hollywood cinema. He seemed to fight with the Hollywood establishment, but never break with it.

Stanley Kramer invented the “adult film,” simple tales with clear-cut humanist messages. With his social commentary films, Kramer symbolized the adult film to a new serious film audience. He started as a writer and then became an independent producer. Early in his career he served as a producer for others: Fred Zinnemann with *The Men* (1950), *High Noon* (1952), and *A Member of the Wedding* (1952); Edward Dmytryk with *The Sniper* (1950) and *The Caine Mutiny* (1954). He then went on to produce and direct *Not as a Stranger* (1955), *The Defiant Ones* (1958), *On the Beach* (1959), *Inherit the Wind* (1960), and *Judgement at Nuremberg* (1961).

Kramer as a director followed the Classical Hollywood style and form, only infusing it with a message such as the need to support legal authority in *High Noon* or the plea for racial togetherness in *The Defiant Ones*. Through the 1950s and into the 1960s he dealt with mental illness, racism, juvenile delinquency, and nuclear war. To his credit in the 1950s when the typical Hollywood film dealt with complex issues only in the strict confines of genre conventions (for example, John Ford confronting racism in *The Searchers*), Stanley Kramer set out to create the serious adult issue-oriented film, in which the spirit of the characters triumphed over the injustice in the world. The economic, social, and political system worked fine, but only if individuals took up their social responsibility and stood up to evil. Kramer proved there was money to be made in an adult market.

RECYCLING HOLLYWOOD'S GENRES

Before the blockbuster changed the notion of what was a “proper” Hollywood film, Hollywood filmmaking went through an era when genre films offered the best the industry could and did produce. A number of talented directors fashioned their best work in the western, film noir, musical, comedy, and melodrama genres. Such important talents as John Ford, Fritz Lang, and Douglas Sirk – all analyzed below – all did their finest work within the strict confines of film genres.

But as tastes changed, so did the movie audience's interests in certain genres. During the 1950s the musical gradually fell from favor while the western reached a crest of popularity. The 1950s represented a decade when Hollywood expended a great deal of time and energy trying to figure out what genres would work on the big screen and which would have to be ceded to television. Even as most filmmakers went off on their own as independents they continued to produce forms of genre cinema because known forms were what studios felt safe selling and distributing around the world. And the major Hollywood companies, with their distribution tentacles around the world, always had their way.

Indeed Hollywood of the 1950s and 1960s grew even more conservative, wanting instant hits. No long-term apparatus of support from owned and operated theaters could guarantee that all films would receive equal access in terms of promotion and theater time. By 1975 the system venerated the blockbuster. To seek the proper formula for a blockbuster, the studios sought a “new” type of “modern” crime film, comedy, and adventure film.

THE WESTERN

The 1950s and into the early 1960s must rank as the Golden Age of the Hollywood western, if for no other reason than John Ford directed one classic of the genre after another. For the general movie-going public,

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stars defined the genre. John Wayne ranked as the biggest box-office star in Hollywood during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Outside his work for John Ford, Wayne starred in such hits as *How the West Was Won* (1963), *The Sons of Katie Elder* (1965), and *True Grit* (1969), generating millions upon millions at the box-office. (As noted above, he also worked with director Howard Hawks.)

A surprise came with the “new” serious westerns of Jimmy Stewart. The laconic star, usually best remembered for his comedies of the 1930s and 1940s, drew fans to theaters during the 1950s with his Anthony Mann-directed westerns: *The Man From Laramie* (1955), *Bend of the River* (1952), and *The Naked Spur* (1953). These took on the settlement of the West as capitalism gone mad, rage always under the veneer of the western hero, with Jimmy Stewart as a flawed individual.

As a feature film the western needed a new twist to compete with television, and Hollywood struggled to create popular but complex, sophisticated westerns. The simple, clear-cut narrative mythology of good versus evil was changed for less one-dimensional stories with round characters dealing with problems like racism or the meaning of life. For example, Delmer Daves’ *Broken Arrow* (1950), starring Jimmy Stewart, sought to offer an authentic study of the 1870s’ **Apache Chief Cochise** seeking peace with the white settlers but being rejected. The film proved so successful it later was turned into a television series.

Other experiments went beyond the innovation of the adult western. A number of filmmakers sought to infuse the western with elements from other genre forms. The Arthur Freed musicals unit at MGM brilliantly produced a western-musical with *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954), directed by Stanley Donen. Arthur Penn, a television-trained director, combined the psychological thriller with the western for *The Left Handed Gun* (1958), a Freudian study of **Billy the Kid**, starring Paul Newman.

Nonetheless, the traditional western hero never went away. Consider *Shane*, one of the most popular westerns of the 1950s, number three at the box-office in the year of the innovation of wide-screen, in 1953. Alan Ladd played “Shane” in the traditional mold, the gunfighter with the questionable past, trying to fit into the new civilization of the west, but being forced to use his guns again to help clean up a helpless town. The location shooting (at Jackson Hole, Wyoming) and the beautiful use of Technicolor enabled this traditional western to successfully compete with the wide-screen spectacles flooding movie screens in the USA that year.

Some argue that television may have even helped the popularity of the feature film western. Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Hopalong Cassidy renewed their careers as western stars in repeats which flooded newly-purchased television sets. Once the Hollywood apparatus began to crank out prime-time series on film, westerns proved the most popular subjects during the 1950s and into the early 1960s: “Wagon Train” (1957–1965); “Wyatt Earp” (1955–1961); “Bonanza” (1959–1973); “Cheyenne” (1955–1963); and “Gunsmoke” (1955–1975). Indeed Clint Eastwood first came to the public’s attention in television’s “Rawhide” (1959–1966), James Garner in “Maverick” (1957–1962), and Steve McQueen in “Have Gun – Will Travel” (1957–1963). All then successfully made the transition to stardom in feature films.

The Hollywood film industry was able to support two of its greatest directors making some of the finest genre films of Hollywood history: John Ford and Anthony Mann. Both would carefully craft westerns which appealed to mass audiences and the discriminating movie fan. They stuck with top stars (John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart, respectively). On the surface they both followed the conventions of the western genre, but with some analysis it is clear that both tested, even examined, the very tenets of the western genre, indeed Hollywood movie making itself.

John Ford had been directing since the late 1910s, but in the 1950s after his independence from Twentieth Century-Fox he was able to create some of the finest westerns ever made. Consider that *My Darling*

Apache Chief Cochise (unknown – 1874) was the principal leader of the Apaches (North American Indians) who resisted the extermination of his people by the US Army.

Billy the Kid was the nickname of William H. Bonney (1859–1881), legendary outlaw and murderer often depicted as having good traits as well. Numerous books and films have been made of his life story.

Clementine (1946), *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *Wagonmaster* (1950), *The Searchers* (1956), *Two Rode Together* (1961), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) all came from this one talent.

This period of complex creativity commenced with Ford's first film after the Second World War: *My Darling Clementine* (1946). For many this is a classic western, holding out for the optimism of the settling of the West. Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) and his brothers help clean up wild Tombstone and in the process enable civilization to take hold. They leave at the film's ending, with Clementine (Cathy Downs) settling in as the school teacher. In retelling the familiar story of the Earp brothers standing up to the evil Clanton family, Ford demonstrated that Hollywood genre films could be fashioned into complex, popular artefacts. The structure of the film is straight-forward and symmetrical, from the opening ominous confrontation between the Earps and the Clantons to the climactic, closing gunfight at the OK Corral. The historical facts were bent to present a classic tale of action and adventure. The "real" Doc Holliday became the man caught in the middle. Like the central figures in *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, he stood tragically between forces of ever advancing civilization and the retreating primitive West.

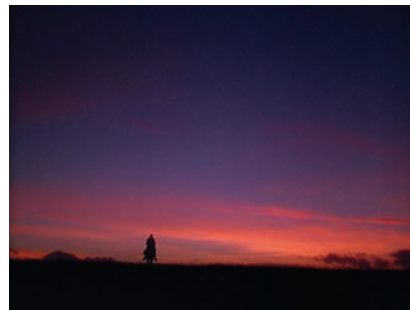
My Darling Clementine twisted the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style rules, at times, to create the proper western tale. Closely viewed, the film frequently lacks proper spatial continuity. Ford implies spaces off screen that in later sequences turn out not to be "there." But the average fan would not notice this experimentation, because Ford's "breaking the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style rules" only served to make a better and more exciting story. *My Darling Clementine* represents a complex visual artefact, but never moving too far from the permissible bounds of the western genre of the Hollywood cinema.

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon stands in the middle of the three films that have come to be known as Ford's cavalry trilogy: *Fort Apache* and *Rio Grande* (1950). The films do not link up except on the level of theme. *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* is the most often singled out for its brilliant use of Technicolor. The hues are rich and muted, the tones mellow, and the richness often somber, intensifying the nostalgia and elegy of a cavalry caught on the edge of the civilized world.

The Searchers (1956) was dismissed by critics in 1956 as simply another formulaic classic Hollywood western, but filmmakers later canonized it as *the great* American film. Steven Spielberg and George Lucas both cite *The Searchers* as the key inspiration to their careers. *The Searchers* certainly is a classic western, a rousing adventure tale. But it is also a sad, almost melancholy examination of the contradictions of settling the Old West, filmed in haunting, shadow-filled hues. At the center of the film stands Ethan Edwards (John Wayne), a bitter, ruthless, and frustrated veteran of the Civil War who engages in a five-year quest to retrieve an orphaned niece, Debbie, who

Wyatt Earp (1848–1929) was a legendary US rancher raising cattle and law man. Together with his brothers he was involved in a feud against the Clanton gang that culminated in a shoot out in the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona, in 1881.

Doc Holliday (1852–1887) was the nickname of John Henri Holliday, gambler and gunman, befriended by Wyatt Earp and involved in the shoot out in the OK Corral.



10.8 Glorious color in Monument Valley from *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (John Ford, 1949).

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was taken by a Comanche Native American raiding party seeking to halt further Western expansion. This neurotic man belongs neither to the civilized world of settlers hanging on at the edge of Monument Valley nor to the Native Americans he pursues. He is proud and heroic but doomed. Edwards is torn between his respect for and racist hatred of the Indian. He speaks their language and is at home with their customs, yet continues to seek revenge for his murdered family.



10.9 Classic John Ford shots in Monument Valley from *The Searchers* (1-2) (John Ford, 1956). Shots from a documentary on John Ford (3-4).

Buttes are isolated vast hill-sized outcrops of pure rock with steep sides and flat tops. In fact, buttes are rock formations in an advanced stage of erosion, before the landscape is completely consumed by wind and rain.

For Ford, never has the wilderness seemed so brutal nor civilization so tenuous and threatened. There are no towns, only outposts and isolated homesteads, tiny specks of existence amidst the towering **buttes** of Monument Valley. The imagery in picturesque Technicolor color is stunning. The massacre of Ethan's family is foreshadowed by a startled covey of quail, a cloud of dust, and breathtaking red sunset shots. Few have not been moved by the image of a grown-up Debbie (Natalie Wood) running down a distant dune, unseen by her searchers. The action ends with a framed battle from the cave; after turning away the Indian charge Ethan emerges into the light, lifts Debbie in his arms, and only then (we think) decides not to kill her. Instead he takes her "home," back to a family which is long dead, a homestead long deserted. The closing of the film repeats the opening as Ethan stands just outside the doorway, never able to come in, nor leave. The outsider is to forever wander the desert.

If *The Searchers* is one of the most beautiful color films ever made, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, in black-and-white in 1962, is surely one of the most barren, most bleak. This was a blockbuster project, bringing John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart together for the first time. The film was almost completely shot in a studio and showed the west as a false myth characterised by deceit and falsehood. Gone were the stunning portraits of Monument Valley in color, replaced by barren, rickety buildings and false hopes of glory and manhood.

The Old West has lost its epic proportions and moved into a ramshackle town. The heroic deed (the shooting of evil Liberty Valance revealed in flashback) is shown to be a lie. But Ransom Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) is hailed as the "hero" and elevated to a position of political power. The true hero dies a pauper. Indeed from the beginning of the film Tom Doniphon (John Wayne), former western hero, has never learned to navigate between civilization and chaos, order and violence. As the character Ransom Stoddard tells his ironic tale of

getting credit for killing the evil Liberty Valance and then going on to turn the territory into a state, we learn that it was Doniphon who actually killed Valance. The newspaper man who interviews the aging Stoddard cynically states: “when the legend becomes fact, print the legend.” Here is Ford at the end of his career noting that while he made his career on directing the western – film after film – it was all legend, not fact. This bleak black-and-white film becomes the swan song of the greatest maker of western films.

The myth of progress Ford had begun in *The Iron Horse* (1924) 40 years earlier had come full circle. In that earlier film, progress was defined as valuing the western hero who brought “civilization” to the lands of the Native Americans. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* the western hero dies anonymously while another is given credit for ridding the town of the evil Liberty Valance.

Anthony Mann had worked first in Hollywood in 1941 as an assistant on Preston Sturges’ *Sullivan’s Travels* (1941) and directed his first feature *Dr. Broadway* a year later. *Devil’s Doorway* (1950) was his first western, and between 1950 and 1960 11 out of a total of 18 films were westerns, five of which starred Jimmy Stewart: *Winchester ’73* (1950), *Bend of the River* (1951), *The Naked Spur* (1952), *The Far Country* (1955), and *The Man from Laramie* (1955). At the time, Stewart was independently producing films, distributing them through Universal. He chose Mann to help establish a “new” Jimmy Stewart. The westerns of Anthony Mann and Jimmy Stewart, as with Ford and Wayne, underscore how the marriage of skilled filmmaker and popular star could be forged to fashion visually complex films that are also box-office hits.

Mann’s westerns centered on an ambivalent, morally flawed hero (Stewart) who was driven in an almost hysterical, psychopathic manner to destroy a villain who mirrors his own worst impulses. The Mann/Stewart hero seeks to kill his spiritual (and sometimes physical) double. The danger to the hero comes not from the usual threat of Indians or forces of nature, but emotions locked in one’s own personality. The disturbed psychological state is reflected in Mann’s distinctive use of landscape. The story takes its figures from lush territories to parched deserts where the climactic struggle can take place in the most desolate of craggy rock formations. No civilization here, only the primitive struggle to find oneself.

Winchester ’73 saw the direct battle between brothers, brought together through the race to win and then recover a prized gun. This initial Mann/Stewart effort proved a major box-office hit. After finishing necessary obligations, Mann made his next seven films (from 1952 through 1955) in partnership with Stewart. They marked a decisive break in Stewart’s career which had been faltering, caught in perpetual adolescence. Beneath the endearing small town western hero, Mann found a colder, edgier, obsessive individual, a neurotic distrustful of the conventions of society. Later, Alfred Hitchcock would take advantage of the “new” Stewart in *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*.

Budd Boetticher was not as famous as John Ford, or even as consistently successful at the box-office as Anthony Mann. But during the 1950s, Boetticher crafted a number of complex westerns starring Randolph Scott, including *The Tall T* (1957) and *Ride Lonesome* (1959). Boetticher worked in other genres, but is most noted for the seven westerns known as the Ranown cycle, named after the company that director Boetticher and his star Randolph Scott formed with producer Harry Joe Brown. Low budget in scale, when compared to the productions of John Ford and Anthony Mann, each of the seven westerns made by Boetticher and Scott were completed in less than a month, and presented apparently simple stories of the settling of the Old West. But Boetticher and screenwriter Burt Kennedy played with the genre conventions – always accenting something new – as in *Seven Men From Now* (1956), *The Tall T* (1957), *Ride Lonesome* (1959), and *Comanche Station* (1959). Boetticher always examined the isolated, self-reliant individual struggling to survive on the margins of a violent world of the Old West. Boetticher’s villains represent evil, primitive men who kill to live while hero Randolph Scott stands as the calm aging cowboy bringing a sense of order to a chaotic world.

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The 1960s saw the abandonment of the western as a popular genre form. As the public looked to different forms, all that was left were westerns that commented on the genre itself – a trend John Ford started with *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* in 1962. Sam Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* (1962), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *The Battle of Cable Hogue* (1970) all examined the role of the aging cowboy in a civilized west and how he did not fit in. Indeed the myth of the settling of the west became the focus: should it have ever been done? Or was it fair to Native Americans and settlers alike? John Ford's *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) and Arthur Penn's *The Little Big Man* (1970) actually focused on the Native American culture; and both favored Native American values over those “imported from Europe.”

In the late 1960s and early 1970s spoofs of the western genre became popular: *Cat Ballou* (1965, starring Lee Marvin and Jane Fonda), *Support Your Local Sheriff* (1968, starring James Garner), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969, with Paul Newman and Robert Redford), and Mel Brooks' *Blazing Saddles* (1974, Cleavon Little and Gene Wilder). Indeed *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* had the heroes flee to Bolivia after they had botched a train robbery. Here are highly romanticized outlaw heroes, likeable rogues representing eclectic throwbacks.

But the end of the genre came when non-Hollywood filmmakers began to create westerns in Europe, called “spaghetti westerns.” Italians (thus the term) developed a thriving industry as they attempted to “outdo” Hollywood at its long-term success – the western genre. The best of this work ranked with the best of Hollywood, both in artistic complexity and box-office attraction. Most of these films were routine re-makes of the classic western tale, with added violence.

Sergio Leone proved that the western was so well known in Europe that he could make self-reflexive stories of the Old West with casts of Italians and older Hollywood stars and get play in Europe and the USA. United Artists made millions at the US box-office with Leone's trilogy: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), and *For A Few Dollars More* (1965) – all of which starred former US TV star Clint Eastwood.

Leone had entered the Italian film industry in 1939, and even at a time worked for Vittorio De Sica on the classic *Bicycle Thief* (1948). Indeed Leone had a small role in this Italian Neo-realist classic. He also learned Hollywood methods toiling on Hollywood spectacles shot in Italy: *Quo Vadis* (1951), *Helen of Troy* (1955), and *Ben-Hur* (1959). But with the “Dollars” series, shot in two languages (Italian and English), Leone became an international name at the box-office and the “new” director of popular westerns in the USA.



10.10 Italian western with stars (Henry Fonda) and landscapes (Monument Valley) from the US in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1968).

Leone reached his acme with a self-reflective tale, *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), sponsored by Paramount, starring Hollywood veterans Charles Bronson, Henry Fonda, and Jason Robards, Jr, and Italian actress Claudia Cardinale. *Once Upon a Time in the West*, for many, signaled the end of the western as a viable form, and indeed there has been no western made since which has even approached its complexity, texture, and careful homage to the past. In fact, one sequence was shot in Monument Valley where John Ford had created most of his westerns. The film set a new standard

of complexity for use of wide-screen imagery, a haunting musical score, and a story which interwove nearly all available elements of the western film genre.

FILM NOIR

The film noir, so popular during the late 1940s, continued on into the 1950s and 1960s – usually sold as a Hollywood mystery or detective film. The film noir of the 1950s found its audience because it offered a darker vision of urban life than could be dreamed up by any science fiction filmmaker or anti-communist pundit. Even Orson Welles, the acclaimed boy-genius who had made *Citizen Kane* in 1941, created *Touch of Evil* in 1958. Actor Charlton Heston agreed to star between his box-office smashes of *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *Ben-Hur* (1959). This persuaded skeptical executives at Universal to give Welles yet another chance to make a Hollywood film, after nearly two decades of box-office failures. But this turned out to be another of Welles' complex experiments that also failed at the box-office. (It was rediscovered by critics 20 years later and is now praised as one of Welles' best.)

Fritz Lang made far more popular film noirs: *Clash by Night* (1952), *The Big Heat* (1953), and *While the City Sleeps* (1955). Lang started in the German Expressionist cinema of the 1920s, but then fled to Hollywood before the outbreak of the Second World War. In Hollywood he worked in many genres, but created his most complex work with film noirs. For example, with *The Big Heat*, for Columbia Pictures, Lang directed one of the most important of film noirs. With Glenn Ford, Lee Marvin, and Gloria Grahame, he created a tale of a dehumanized quest for vengeance by a renegade policeman against a remote but all-powerful mob figure. Here was the lone individual struggling in a chaotic urban environment against hopeless odds. Morality is shattered; no one knows who is good and who is bad. Lang's dappled lighting and skilled use of seemingly every possible icon of urban America reinforce the spilt.

As a narrative, *The Big Heat* played off a conventional story of a crusading police officer seeking revenge for the murder of his wife. The characterization and heroic ending remained conventional enough, but the portraits of crime figures, from the gangster's moll Debby (Gloria Grahame) to the hood Vince Stone (Lee Marvin), were outlined with a cold savage skill. Violence functions as part of this world in the same way it does in the western. Bannion (Glenn Ford) represents a hero who stands outside the law and the crime world, willing to do anything to exact revenge. Indeed his cop, like Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* (1971) 20 years later, is himself a master of violence, a figure with absolutely no moral restraints.

Sam Fuller represented the renegade director who was willing to work cheap, and take on any project however small the budget. Rather than go to work for a studio, he stubbornly clung to the edges of the industry while looking for ways to deal with niches not treated in sanitized television productions in the USA.



10.11 Shots from *The Big Heat* (Fritz Lang, 1953). Gangster treating his girlfriend badly.

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His independence endeared him to the French auteurs. Fuller re-worked a number of genres, but most notably film noir in *Pickup on South Street* (1953). Fuller certainly followed the Hollywood Classical rules of filmmaking, but was deft at provoking the emotions of the audience through shocking effects.

For example, in *Pickup on South Street*, petty crook Skip McCoy (Richard Widmark) has his eyes fixed on the big score. When the cocky three-time convict picks the pocketbook of unsuspecting Candy (Jean Peters), he finds a haul bigger than he could have imagined: a strip of microfilm bearing confidential US secrets. Tailed by manipulative federal agents and the unwitting courier's Communist puppeteers, Skip and Candy find themselves in a precarious gambit that pits greed against redemption, and passion against self-preservation. With his signature raw energy and hardboiled repartee, Sam Fuller's *Pickup on South Street* is a true film noir classic by one of Hollywood's most under-rated directors.

Don Siegel almost single-handedly kept alive the film noir during the 1960s and early 1970s as represented by *The Killers* (1964), *Madigan* (1968), and *Dirty Harry* (1971). These all presented bleak examinations of policemen who worked effectively only on their own, despite – not because of – the effectiveness of the political system. In their individualism, they triumphed over evil – or did they? The system itself remained corrupt. As a trained editor, Siegel showed the pursuit of the wrong-doer via a set of moments of confrontation such as Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) aiming his massive pistol at a criminal and asking him if he wishes to take a chance that Harry has run out of bullets. Harry confronts a criminal, asking: “Did he [Harry] fire six shots or only five? Well, to tell you the truth, in all this excitement I kind of lost track myself. But being as this is a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world, and would blow your head clean off, you’ve got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel lucky? Well, do ya, punk?” This dialogue has become some of the most famous for movie fans.

THE MUSICAL

The Hollywood musical would not survive the television era because it became too expensive. Only a major Broadway hit seemed to be able to guarantee popularity – for example as in *Oklahoma!* (1955), *South Pacific* (1958), *Pajama Game* (1957), and *Damn Yankees* (1958). Into the 1960s, successful musicals were limited to these proven Broadway hits: *West Side Story* (1961), *My Fair Lady* (1965), and *The Sound of Music* (1965). Indeed, for a time *The Sound of Music* was the highest grosser in Hollywood history. The blockbuster success of this American operetta led to any number of imitators during the late 1960s, but to disastrous results. *Finian's Rainbow* (1968), *Darling Lili* (1969), and *Paint Your Wagon* (1969) were all meant to outgross *The Sound of Music*; all failed at the box-office. This officially ended the era of the studio musical. However, during the 1950s one director did craft significant contributions with his musicals from MGM.

Vincente Minnelli provided popular, complex, fascinating musicals including *An American in Paris* (1951), an Academy Award winner, *The Band Wagon* (1953) with Fred Astaire, and *Gigi* (1958), the final major musical from the MGM factory of producer Arthur Freed. *An American in Paris* was a Technicolor spectacle starring Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron and is best known for a 17-minute ballet choreographed by Kelly.

The Band Wagon emerged from a witty, engaging script by Betty Comdon and Adolph Green. It starred Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse, and was given extraordinary life by Michael Kidd's inspired, innovative choreography. Classic tunes of the past were revived in numbers centered around “Dancing in the Dark” and “That's Entertainment.” *The Band Wagon* tendered a true back-stage set-piece at the same time spoofing the conventions of the genre itself. *Gigi*, with Leslie Caron and Maurice Chevalier, earned an Academy

Award for best picture, and sadly, although no one realized at the time, would come to represent the last Hollywood-crafted musical.



10.12 Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse dancing two very different styles in *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953).

COMEDIES

The comedy genre never vanished. Indeed in the late 1950s the light comedies of Doris Day and Rock Hudson reached the top of Hollywood money lists, grossing millions of dollars. *That Touch of Mink* (1962), *Irma La Douce* (1963), *The Apartment* (1960), *Operation Petticoat* (1960), and *Some Like It Hot* (1959) all finished in the top ten box-office attractions for their respective seasons. Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis consistently ranked as top ten box-office attractions, as did Rock Hudson (who headed the list in 1957 and 1959) and Doris Day (who headed the list in 1960).

Comedies of the 1950s and 1960s came in a variety of forms. Efforts alternated between the dark cynicism of Billy Wilder in his *The Apartment* (starring Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine in the Academy Award winner of 1960), and the light teenage tales of boy or girl making good as characterized by vehicles starring Sandra Dee: *Gidget* (1959), *Tammy Tell Me True* (1961), and *Tammy and the Doctor* (1963). One director was able to fashion his most interesting work by spoofing the excesses of Hollywood, the new found obsession with television, and the ever pervasiveness of mass culture in general – Frank Tashlin.

Frank Tashlin made his name by making fun of the foundations of popular culture in general, and film comedy in particular during the 1950s. Tashlin's *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (1957), starring Jayne Mansfield and Tony Randall, structured like the “theater of the absurd,” produced a brilliant critique and deconstruction of the male and female ideal image during the conservative 1950s. The movie is filled with quotations, filmic and non-filmic references, and in-jokes, so much so that the film is almost a modern art work. Tashlin's cinema rests not only with his play with sexual stereotypes, but also his insistence that comedies should deconstruct, reactivate, and re-produce to an absurd extent the “real” world.

Tashlin, as much as it was possible in a changing Hollywood, enveloped television



10.13 Frank Tashlin.

The Theater of the absurd was a broad avant-garde theater movement that originated in France and came to the fore in the 1950s. The absurdists regard human behavior and language as irrational. Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) and Eugène Ionesco (1912–1994) were important absurdists.

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by introducing direct references to it as well as other media including other films and even the film production process itself. His films were filled with images of comic books and film animation, drawing out the mosaic collective nature of the filmic image itself. He combined all this “new” material within the Classical Hollywood framework into an almost illogical, incongruous whole. That is, the comedy rested with manipulation of the medium as well as traditional character situations.

Thematically, Tashlin's films deal with the decay of the modern world. They were filled with the icons of the new mass culture of the 1950s, from rock 'n' roll to comic books to Marilyn Monroe clone Jayne Mansfield, to television itself, overwhelming anyone trying to seriously deal with them. For example, in *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* the popularity of Tina Marlowe (Jayne Mansfield) causes all other women to engage in dangerous bust-expanding exercises to the point of nervous exhaustion. The cartoon figure, Marlowe, is easily seen as the animated figure of the “real” Marilyn Monroe.

Yet Tashlin still worked in Hollywood, the source of most of society's images of itself. The central contradiction of his work lay in this critique of mass culture by an artist struggling and functioning at the very heart of that cultural production. If Tashlin criticized vulgarity, he never strayed far from the center of the creation of mass vulgarity in the world. In *The Girl Can't Help It* a non-talent (Mansfield again) becomes a star, viewing the process with cynicism, but never abandoning the quest for stardom.

MELODRAMA

The melodrama never went away either. This formula, which dealt with overblown family problems complicated by a repressive small town milieu, and the preoccupation with unsolvable sexual fantasies, was aimed at female movie fans. Concern with the stability of family, a thematic pre-occupation of the 1950s mass media, provided the centerpiece for melodrama where families were split apart, only to be returned intact (temporarily) at the end of the film. In film, the term “melodrama” denotes stereotyped character development, and highly emotional themes. Melodramatic films tend to use plots that appeal to the heightened emotions of the audience, often dealing with crises of human emotion such as failed romances, strained familial situations, illnesses, neuroses, or emotional and physical hardships.

Douglas Sirk took the melodrama back to basics, making films which looked old-fashioned even during the repressive 1950s. On the one hand, Sirk would create films which offered complete illusion, fully absorbing the viewer. But Sirk was a European left-wing intellectual with a background in the world of German Expressionism, and thus was familiar with concepts and techniques of the manipulation of *mise-en-scène*, in particular gesture, light, and color.

He fled from Nazi Germany in 1937, and made his way to Hollywood. He toyed with many genres, but only achieved success with making melodramas for Universal during the 1950s: *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956), and *Imitation of Life* (1959). These were popular with audiences, and gave Sirk the freedom to work within what many considered to be the most oppressive of genres and yet critique it at the same time.

For example, *All That Heaven Allows* poses the tale of a woman (Jane Wyman) who after the death of her husband rejects a responsible suitor to marry her (lower-class) gardener, thereby upsetting the fundamental values of her middle-class existence. Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) is an affluent widow living in suburban New England, whose social life involves her country peers, college-age children, and a couple of men vying for her affection. She becomes interested in Ron Kirby (Rock Hudson), her family's gardener, who is content with his simple life outside of judgmental society, and the two fall in love. Ron advises Cary to avoid the

peer pressure; at first she accepts his proposal for marriage, but becomes distressed when her friends and children look down upon and reject her for this socially unacceptable marriage. She thus breaks off the marriage when her children threaten to abandon her. Both she and Ron continue their separate lives in sorrow. As Cary's social life returns to its original state, she notices other women becoming engaged and living lives of happiness. Even her own children are soon to leave the family home. Cary realizes that she is ready to defy social norms and commit to loving Ron. She rushes to his side when he has a life-threatening accident, telling him that she has come home.

All That Heaven Allows plays out this family crisis from the woman's point of view, focusing on her conflicting desires. Rock Hudson as the gardener is a fantasy hero to women – tall, dark, self-contained, at work in the background, but attentive and gentle. He is a romantic figure precisely because he presents an alternative image of proper masculinity, challenging middle-class notions of proper social class and appreciation of the codes of romantic woman's fiction. The film uses mise-en-scène to indicate the mental state of the central character and to comment on the conservative values supposedly adhered to as part of the “correct” functioning of society.

Some two decades after the release of *Written on the Wind* (1956), Sirk's melodramas were rediscovered. Film scholars noticed the ideological critique in Sirk's ironic use of figures, decor, costume, and lighting. The plot of *Written on the Wind* is ordinary enough, filled with crises of a son's impotence, a father's failure as family leader, and a daughter's obsessive, misdirected desires, all played out against class and sexual differences.

We see elaborate mise-en-scène, including the massive family mansion, oil pumps working incessantly against the skyline, contrasting colors and costume of the conflicting couples, particularly the reds associated with Marylee, played by Dorothy Malone (sports car, flowers, negligee), and cool green associated with Lucy (Lauren Bacall). This expressive use of color denotes a special Sirkian melodramatic world. Sirk broke with all accepted traditional use of color and based in the German Expressionistic cinema of the 1920s he created a “Hollywood Expressionistic” use of color.

The spaces of hallways and landings offer continual sites for the conflict. Characters constantly cross each other's paths, and in the process exchange confidences, malicious innuendo, and accusations. The organization of the mise-en-scène concentrates on strong primary colors, contrasts of dark and light, exaggerated movement and gestures to produce a world dominated by physical and psychological violence, marked by emotional excess which threatens to overturn the fragile stability of the established order. Overlaying all this is the Sirkian irony of excessive objects everywhere, his play with cliché, for example focusing on a nodding mechanical horse and grinning child at the moment Kyle recognizes he is impotent. An example



10.14 Examples of Douglas Sirk's use of mirrors in *Written on the Wind* (Douglas Sirk, 1956).

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John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) was President of the United States from January 1961 until his assassination in November 1963.

Watergate was the political scandal in the US that led to the fall of President Nixon in 1974. Journalists of the Washington Post revealed that Nixon had ordered the bugging of the Watergate building – the headquarters of the Democratic Party.

The Vietnam War started as an internal war between North and South Vietnam after gaining independence from France. Between 1954 and 1973 the US was actively involved in preventing South Vietnam from becoming a communist state. The South surrendered in 1975 to the North and in 1976 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was established.

of Sirk's play with mirrors occurs when Mitch enters with a drunken Kyle over his shoulder, caught in a hallway mirror.

Sirk may have been the master of the melodrama, but others played the form in more standard fashion. Indeed even in the hip late 1960s and early 1970s this traditional genre of the melodrama never fully went away. So, for example, the top grossing film of 1970, *Airport*, offered the viewer a traditional melodrama. This and other “disaster” films gathered a group of people in danger because of the failure of modern technology and then saw how the good survived and the flawed did not. Disease threatened as well. Cancer became the subject of *Love Story* (1970), the first mega-hit of the 1970s, and the first film to exceed \$50 million in gross revenue in the USA since *Gone with the Wind* (1939).

“NEW” GENRES OF THE 1960S

After the death of **John F. Kennedy** in November 1963, the 1960s offered an era of questioning, of re-examination of past virtues. This included the basic tenets of film genres as well. Many of the most faithful of film fans were seeking alternative lifestyles, new ways to look at and understand their turbulent world. So in the late 1960s, we had meta-generic films (films commenting on films), contemplating the film genres audiences grew up seeing. A gangster film about gangster films, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967 – directed by Arthur Penn), and a film about growing up *The Graduate* (1967 – directed by Mike Nichols), denoted the beginning of this trend which would continue until “the 1960s” ended with **Watergate** in 1974. These were not so much original creations, but filmmakers pondering the conventions of past genres.

In 1968 came what we might call “youth films.” *The Graduate*, starring Dustin Hoffman, with the music of Art Garfunkel and Paul Simon, certainly kicked off this sub-genre. This was the top grossing film of the year. The following year, Columbia Pictures released *Easy Rider* (1969), a film which cost less than \$500,000, but finished 11th in the box-office standings. This motorcycle odyssey across the Southwestern United States focused on two drop-outs searching for meaning in life. It was conceived of by Peter Fonda, directed (his debut) by Dennis Hopper, and introduced actor Jack Nicholson to the cinema. Rarely did Hollywood take on the establishment directly, but Robert Altman's anti-war black comedy *M*A*S*H* (1970) situated the absurdity of the **Vietnam War** using a story about the US medical units trying to save soldiers' lives in Korea.

A foreshadowing of the blockbuster examined an old genre: *The Godfather* (1972), directed by Francis Ford Coppola. The big star of the film was Marlon Brando, but Coppola assembled a cast of soon to become stars such as Diane Keaton and Al Pacino. Previous gangster movies had looked at the gangs from the perspective of an outraged outsider. In contrast, Coppola presented the gangster's perspective of the Mafia as a rational response to corrupt US class oriented society. Although the Corleone family is presented as immensely rich and powerful, there is no hint of where its money comes from, no scenes depicting prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, or other forms of racketeering. The Don even denounces drugs as unethical, while the other vices *The Godfather* offers are what a smug society declared illegal but practiced underground.

THE BLOCKBUSTER

A new era commenced when a new younger generation was able to enter Hollywood, direct films, and make vast amounts of money for the studios. This was hinted at with the box-office success of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972). The first films to gross more than a quarter of a billion dollars were Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977). Suddenly feature films – labeled

“blockbusters” – offered in the summer season from May to September caught Wall Street’s and fans’ attention as their grosses were measured in billions of dollars.

Francis Ford Coppola certainly ranks as the first success story of a young man who went to film school to make a great Hollywood film. His entry was only possible because the Hollywood film industry had reached its lowest point in money making since the industry had been created. One consequence was that studios were briefly willing to give young new directors a shot at this stage. Coppola’s *You’re a Big Boy Now* (1967) and *The Rain People* (1969) proved he could make interesting films. Coppola discovered that a return to re-working of genres could be manipulated into blockbusters. It simply took the right formula. Coppola carefully studied past Hollywood masters and skillfully drew on his knowledge of film history.

Coppola was not much older than the audience his films were intended to reach. In his most famous work, Coppola re-worked the best-selling novel into the top grosser of its year, *The Godfather*. Nothing on TV could compete with Coppola’s tale of capitalism run amok. This inspired Hollywood movie moguls to “green-light” more best-selling novels into blockbuster films. Ultimately, this led to *Jaws*.

Steven Spielberg broke into Hollywood by directing television shows and then TV movies (for example, *Duel* in 1971). Coming after one modest film, *Sugarland Express* (1973), *Jaws* provided one of the most finely crafted Classical Hollywood narratives ever made. This textbook of Classical Hollywood filmmaking proved that genre films, skillfully directed in a traditional style, could make millions of dollars for a studio – in this case Universal. In June 1975, suddenly the USA was awash with terror of “the Great White Shark.” Ocean resorts emptied as shark sightings tripled. While this was media hysteria, its publicity offered a classic example of a terror film – advertised widely on television – tempting millions of curious fans to stand in line to see what *Jaws* was all about. *Jaws* became the first true blockbuster. It was more than a successful movie. It was a film that redefined the popular culture of its day. Indeed, *Jaws* has been replayed every summer on cable TV since 1975.

Spielberg went on to direct several more films in different genres. His *1941* (1979) was a crazy comedy and a true failure for critics, for movie fans, and for Universal. More successful on all these fronts was the science fiction film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and the phenomenal fantasy *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* (1981). The latter film zoomed to the top of the box-office charts and became the most popular film of all time – surpassing *Gone with the Wind*.

Spielberg’s mega-hits seemed to follow a consistent pattern. In the typical Spielberg film, the central figure, a male, has his conception of the world undermined and then enlarged as he comes face-to-face with some extraordinary force. In *Jaws* it was a great white shark. In *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *E.T.* the



10.15 Shots from *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975).

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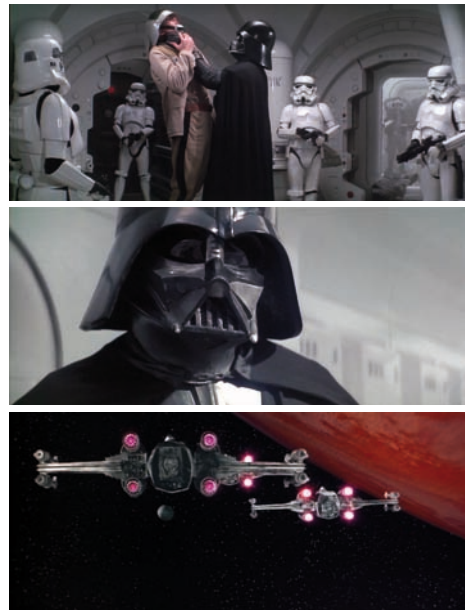
extraordinary force was from another world. There is no vision of social concern in these films, only an elementary emotional appeal.

George Lucas changed Hollywood forever with *Star Wars* (1977). In 1967, Lucas worked as an assistant to Coppola on *Finian's Rainbow* (1968) and shot a documentary about the making of Coppola's *The Rain People* (1968). It was on the strength of these efforts that Coppola persuaded Warner Bros. to sign Lucas to do *THX-1138* (1971). The result was a science fiction film of great skill, but unfortunately a failure at the box-office.

Lucas would gain an extraordinary measure of fame and fortune in the meantime with a teenage "coming of age" film, *American Graffiti* (1973). This portrait of the day and night before the hero goes off to college, with its soundtrack of rock and roll songs from a decade earlier, was a winner at the box-office. Produced by Coppola, it sparked the careers of Cindy Williams, Harrison Ford, Suzanne Sommers, Ron Howard, and Richard Dreyfuss. It made Universal a great deal of money and made Lucas a force in Hollywood.

Lucas used his newfound power wisely. His next film was *Star Wars* (1977). Based on his enthusiasm for pulp science fiction, comic heroes, and low-budget serials of the 1940s, this single film proved that the right vehicle could make millions and millions of dollars. *Star Wars* created a money machine no one had foreseen. The spin-offs from the movie generated a new industry, creating for Twentieth Century-Fox the toy underwriting market from Disney. Using Dolby sound and computer animation and modeling, *Star Wars* and its sequels revitalized movies for children. But it trapped Lucas for the rest of his career; he could not work around the success of this "franchise" blockbuster.

Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* and George Lucas' *Star Wars* would confirm what Coppola had already proven. A new era, of contemporary filmmaking, had begun. It was defined by the blockbuster. That is, once a hit was discovered, the director replicated and repeated it. These were expensive, but as the many versions of *Star Wars* proved, extraordinarily profitable and popular. Film fans still know that summer starts when the ads for new movie extravaganzas appear. Then they are tested in their first weekend, and if the takings are high enough, they last for the summer. If not, the studios turn to another variation of a text, often taken from some other portion of popular culture. The blockbuster became the centerpiece of the new Hollywood industry. The Hollywood feature film could offer something that TV did not – the blockbuster. But while widely popular, Coppola, Spielberg, and Lucas made films that worked well within Classical Hollywood filmmaking rules, and so while Hollywood publicity praised their innovations, stylistically they were a throwback to the Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s.



10.16 Shots from *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* (George Lucas, 1977). Darth Vader as personification of evil (1–2); X-Wings in space (3).

CASE STUDY 10

A CRITIC WHO CHANGED THE STATUS OF HOLLYWOOD MOVIES

In 1965 a British school teacher, Robin Wood, wrote a small book called *Hitchcock's Films*. Wood offered an introduction as to why Hitchcock was important enough to deserve a book, and tendered chapters on recent Hitchcock fare. The serious study of the movies in the English world would never be the same again.

Wood started his Introduction to Hitchcock directly: "Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?" These six words challenged the conventional wisdom of the day that close analysis of recent movies was just not worth the effort. [All quotations in this Case Study are from the introduction to *Hitchcock's Films*. See references at the end of this chapter.]



10.17 Advertisement for *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960).

Wood countered: "It is a pity the question has to be raised: if the cinema were truly regarded as an autonomous art, not as a mere adjunct of the novel or the drama – if we were able yet to see films instead of mentally reducing them to literature – it would be unnecessary. As things are, it seems impossible to start a book on Hitchcock without confronting it."

Wood did close analysis of popular Hollywood films, then considered a radical act. Wood contrasted close readings of Hitchcock to close readings of a contemporary novel – and then arduously argued movies were more complex. "A novelist could give us some kind of equivalent for all this, could make us react along the same general lines; but he couldn't make us react in this direct, immediate way, as image succeeds image – he couldn't control our reactions so precisely in time." The novelist could analyze and explain; Hitchcock could make a movie-goer experience characters directly.

Wood concluded: "The cinema has its own methods and its own scope. We must beware of missing the significance of a shot or a sequence by applying to it assumptions brought from our experience of other arts."

Then Wood raised the key problem: wasn't *Psycho* just a Hollywood movie? Wood explained why *Psycho* should be considered a complex artistic expression and that Hollywood movies were more than just popular culture. Wood used his knowledge of the popularity of Elizabethan drama: "One thinks of those editors who have wished to remove the Porter scene from *Macbeth* because its tone of bawdy comedy is incompatible with the tragic atmosphere; of Dr. Johnson's complaints about Shakespeare's fondness for 'quibbles' and conceits." Academics argued Shakespeare allowed himself these regrettable lapses from high seriousness just to please the "groundlings." But just how different were these audiences from those who embraced Hollywood fare? Not that different, said Wood.

Wood got even bolder in his second book: *Howard Hawks* (1968): "I remember once expressing great admiration for Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo*. I was promptly told that it couldn't be a very good

film, because Hawks had used a pop-singer (Ricky Nelson) and then introduced a song sequence quite arbitrarily to give him something to sing.” Why was this different in terms of strict thematic unity than justifying the comic role of Autolycus in *The Winter’s Tale*, asked Wood.

Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks, Wood argued, were as close to the purity of their art as was William Shakespeare to his. Nearly a half century later few would not take Hitchcock and Hawks as serious, important movie makers.

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CHAPTER II

THE EUROPEAN ART-CINEMA ALTERNATIVE

Introduction

The archetypal modern film: The French New Wave

The New Wave aesthetic

German cinema after World War II

New German Cinema

The individual as international film artist

After the art-cinema epoch

Case study II: Art-movie theaters in the USA

INTRODUCTION

European filmmakers were forced to adapt in the television age. Not only did they still have to battle Hollywood, as Hollywood still made millions of dollars in profits from distributing movies in Europe in wide-screen and color formats, they also had to test the new world of filmmaking in an era when television was taking over as the mass medium. All over Europe more and more filmmakers began to seek alternatives and increasingly gave up trying to beat Hollywood on its own terms.

Certainly a number of mainstream films sought mass audiences, but more and more important filmmakers self-consciously began to make art films, providing knowing film fans a distinct choice to the look and narrative formula coming from Hollywood. Film-goers, often intellectuals looking for alternatives to television and pop culture on the one hand and the traditional modes of “high art” (literature, music, and drama) on the other, embraced this new film art.

By the 1960s European art-film directors became international stars. Alain Resnais, François Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Godard, the key members of the French New Wave, became the “names-above-the-title” on the art-house circuit. In the 1960s, in Europe and increasingly in the United States, it was *de rigueur* in university circles to have seen the latest Fellini or Bergman film, and to be able to discuss it intelligently.

A cultural vocabulary to analyze film was developed. At first in specialized magazines and then regularly in the “Arts and Leisure” sections of the major metropolitan newspapers, the work of European auteurs was discussed in the same way one might consider a serious new novel, or the work of an important playwright or composer. Film had come of age, although there was always the feeling that – with the continued popularity of Hollywood cinema – it was still a step-child to more serious artistic endeavours.

European art films had a unique sense of style, one which still had a story to tell (although with gaps that Hollywood would have never condoned) but with a flair for the non-acceptable techniques found in Classical Hollywood cinema. European art cinema was purposely not easy to follow; that was part of its pleasure. Here the laws of the fictional world were not so easily knowable, the personal psychology of characters rarely operated in a straightforward cause-and-effect pattern. The art cinema presented stories centered around contemporary psychological problems of alienation and the difficulty of communication.

European art filmmakers sought to “de-dramatize” story-telling by presenting both climactic *and* trivial moments, to emphasize the inherent flexibility of film techniques, not simply the norms of the Classical Hollywood style. In particular, art-cinema filmmakers loosened (but usually never fully abandoned) cause-and-effect story-telling, provided episodic stories with often ambivalent endings left open for many different interpretations, and enhanced film’s symbols through an emphasis on the fluctuations of character psychology – all prohibited within the rules of the Hollywood cinema of the 1950s.

These art films did not lack characters, but they acted very differently from those who regularly populated the world of Hollywood film. Viewers were encouraged to become interested in a character’s changing mental state. And the filmmaker developed this through dream sequences, flashbacks of memories, scenes of hallucinations, and frequent fantasies. Flashbacks and flash forwards told the viewer about what a character was thinking. In sum, these and other non-Hollywood filmic devices asked viewers to closely examine a film, to seek out and interpret symbolic meanings, and then laud those auteur directors who made complex use of the tools of movie making.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s international art cinema reached a peak. Consider that from 1957 to 1961, one could see Federico Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria* (*Le notti di Cabiria*, 1957), Ingmar Bergman’s

Wild Strawberries (*Smultronstället*, 1957), Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) (literally translated as *The Adventure*, but the film is known under its Italian title), Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961), Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) (the title's translation – Hiroshima My Love – is never used), François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups*, 1959), and Jean Luc Godard's *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1960). Directing a film had become as respectable as writing a novel.

THE ARCHETYPAL MODERN FILM MOVEMENT: THE FRENCH NEW WAVE

The classic expression of European art cinema came in France with its “New Wave.” Directors Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, and Alain Resnais began as critics, centered around the Paris film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and attacked the French film establishment of the 1950s. They are considered the originators of the New Wave. As film historian Susan Hayward has pointed



11.1 Brigitte Bardot in *Le Mépris* or *Contempt* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963).

out, these young men thrived because producers were convinced of the interest in youth as a subject in cinema. Ironically this interest in youth started with the immense success of the young actress Brigitte Bardot in her popular film *And God Created Woman* (*Et Dieu... créa la femme*, 1956), about an immortal teen. French producers then sought out young faces and young directors and invested in these new films.

Truffaut (age 24 in 1956) along with fellow cinéastes Godard (age 26), and Claude Chabrol (also 26) through their writings championed directors considered out-of-date (Max Ophüls and Jean Renoir, for example), or “strange” (Jacques Tati and Robert Bresson, to name but two examples). Even more scandalous was their unabashed love for selected, mainstream Hollywood films. These angry young men of Paris of the mid-1950s boldly proclaimed their admiration and respect for certain Hollywood *auteurs*, ranking them far above the filmmakers in their own country. They argued that some Hollywood filmmakers transcended the constraints of the studio system and made films that reflected their personality. The *Cahiers* group championed the films of John Ford (*The Searchers*, the 1956 western starring John Wayne) and Nicholas Ray (*Rebel without a Cause*, a 1955 teen rebellion film starring James Dean). Neither then was considered a great Hollywood film. They praised Ford and Ray for creating a unique vision of the world on film. Truffaut asserted that there were no individual movies, but only cinema by auteurs.

The idea of the auteur of a film became the very foundation of the French New Wave. First, individuals could and should “author” movies in the same way a novelist would write a book or a composer would craft a piece of music. Second, a new language of cinema ought to be sought that went beyond Hollywood. This stemmed from a rebellion against the factory system of production that dominated Classical Hollywood filmmaking.

These ideas seem tame, but in the mid-1950s, after 30 years of the monolith of Hollywood dominating everything in sight, they were considered a bit radical. But these young men of Paris of the mid-1950s wanted to do more than critique the work of fellow French filmmakers or Hollywood *auteurs*. Lacking any real experience in film production – more than half of the New Wave directors had never been involved in

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movie production before – they set out to show the world the “proper” way to make movies. They solicited funds wherever they could find them and shot on improvised locations in and about Paris. Their first works were typically short subjects, but by 1959 François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Alain Resnais all had moved into the arena of making the feature-length film. Godard crafted *Breathless*, Truffaut *The 400 Blows*, and Resnais *Hiroshima mon amour*. In April of 1959, Truffaut won the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival with his *The 400 Blows* and the French New Wave as a film movement began.



11.2 Cramped apartment in *Les quatre cents coups* or *The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959).

The mainstream French press of the day named this group of youthful rebels *la nouvelle vague* (the New Wave). This would be the first of the many recognized “new waves” in the art-cinema world which would come to notice in subsequent years. Few ever matched the initial output of the *Cahiers* group. Between 1959 and 1966 François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Claude Chabrol, and Eric Rohmer created two dozen films. Critics hailed the French New Wave (and the French film industry in general) as among the most creative and prolific in the world.

The French film industry was in a shambles at the end of the Second World War, but it made a remarkable recovery between 1947 and 1957 thanks to government support (setting up quotas against Hollywood and offering loans to filmmakers). Audiences doubled. The Centre National de la Cin  matographie (National center for cinematography, hereafter CNC) – established in October of 1946 – revived the film industry. No branch of the business could operate without its official authorization. The CNC not only organized and financed film production, distribution, and exhibition, it was also responsible for the non-commercial cinema, represented France at film festivals, and oversaw the training of film technicians. A ticket tax guaranteed consistent funding. The CNC operated with greater control than any agency in the United States.

The CNC encouraged co-productions with companies from other European nations. For example, Alain Resnais’ *The War is Over* (*La guerre est finie*, 1966) was a French-Swedish production while Jean-Luc Godard’s *Pierrot le fou* (1965) (Crazy Pierrot, but the English translation is never used) was a French-Italian co-production. CNC led the way as co-production gained favor after World War II in part as a means to match Hollywood funding. Cooperative financing spread the risk, doubled the market base, and offered film technicians from participating nations a chance for steady employment.

But then in the late 1950s, TV came to France in a significant way and theatrical attendance fell sharply. As in the USA, there were other reasons for this decline, as historian Susan Hayward has shown in her book *French National Cinema*. One of them was that many rural communities (where about half the French population lived) were left without film showings after the traveling cinemas stopped. Another cause came

from the suburbanization of French cities. As with the USA, the urban population was moving outside the city center, while the bulk of already built theaters were located in-town. The films of the French New Wave were seen as an attractive opportunity to regain theatrical attendance.

Mainstream distributors liked the way New Wave filmmakers, such as Truffaut and Godard, kept costs down by using unknown actors, location shooting, and limited production schedules. In turn the CNC changed the formula for aiding filmmakers, becoming more flexible and more accommodating to change. A prize for first films was set up in order to encourage new talent. Many historians praise the CNC as the basis of the French New Wave. In 1959, more than 100 of the 130 features turned out in France that year were by first-time directors. And these “first features” not only earned prizes at film festivals around the world, but they gained a devoted audience in the USA. For example, Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows* brought in half a million dollars for distribution rights from the United States alone.

By the early 1960s the New Wave had become the heart of the French film industry. But its success partially proved its undoing as within a decade New Wave filmmakers began to enter the mainstream of international commercial filmmaking. In 1965 Truffaut journeyed to England to make *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) for Hollywood’s Universal Pictures. Godard made *Contempt* (*Le Mépris*, 1963) for an avowed commercial Italian producer, Italian Carlo Ponti. This signaled that the “New Wave” was becoming the new establishment.

THE NEW WAVE AESTHETIC

French New Wave directors crafted many films, often highly disparate in form and style. But there were enough similarities in how they told their stories, used *mise-en-scène*, and manipulated possibilities of sound and camerawork to identify a common thread, a shared set of characteristics, the tenets of a film movement. They drew their inspiration from cinema’s history which they watched and studied at the extraordinary Parisian institution, the Cinémathèque Française. This film museum not only saved as many films as it could, it also screened them nearly around the clock. Founder Henri Langlois represented the highest order of *cinéophile*, asserting that film ought to be studied as closely as literary history or the history of music and painting. More than half of the New Wave filmmakers, thus, did not learn filmmaking in school or through an apprenticeship program. Rather they learned by watching as many films as possible, learning from the great directors and avoiding the mistakes of the past.

But they needed a theory by which to pull this knowledge of the cinema together. This was provided by their mentor, writer André Bazin, who had been a co-founder of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Bazin argued that cinema was an important art form. One had to use the strength of the cinema, and its affinity with reality, to construct a new style of filmmaking. The New Wave directors did not follow all the tenets preached by Bazin, but drew needed inspiration from his passion and intellect.

From Bazin they recognized that cinema was no neutral object but an artefact created by humans. The Classical Hollywood cinema stressed a seamless, polished look, never reminding the viewer that he or she was watching a movie. French New Wave films avoided this style, in contrast stressing an almost casual, sloppy look. The New Wave directors wanted to avoid what they considered Hollywood’s artificiality and capture the reality as developed by the Italian Neo-realists championed by Bazin, particularly Roberto Rossellini.

So the young men of the French New Wave took to the streets (in this case Paris). Indeed Paris became a “star” of the New Wave cinema, a recognizable icon in almost every film. In Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows* and

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In 1947 Eclair designed the Caméflex, a portable camera with a film magazine that allowed changing the film in only two seconds. The improved version called NPR (Noiseless Portable Reflex) designed for sync sound filming was introduced in 1963.

The Soft Skin (*La peau douce*, 1964), and Godard's *Breathless* and *Masculine, Feminine* (*Masculin, féminin: 15 faits précis*, 1966) one saw Parisian cafés and busy streets. Paris itself became a draw in the same way as did Jean-Paul Belmondo, Jeanne Moreau, and Jean-Pierre Léaud.

In addition, in using Parisian locations, New Wave filmmakers relied on flexible, portable, cheap equipment. Eclair's inexpensive camera freed them to take to the streets. In Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* (*Jules et Jim*, 1962) we find a 360-degree pan; in his *The 400 Blows* the camera goes into the Doinel family apartment and shows the audience their cramped quarters. One senses why the young Antoine Doinel feels so much freedom on the streets of Paris. In *Breathless* Godard had his camera operator hold the camera while seated in a wheel chair to follow actors Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg as they strolled down a Parisian boulevard.

Shooting on the streets avoided the crafted look of glossy Hollywood studio lighting. Indeed Truffaut would go on to make a whole film examining how Hollywood had long fooled audiences by shooting *Day for Night* (*La nuit américaine*, 1973). In order to save money the Classical Hollywood system shot "night" scenes during the day with heavy filters in order to make day seem to be night. In *Day for Night* Truffaut employed this as a central metaphor of the Hollywood illusionism.



11.3 Opening sequence in which the making of the film is 'revealed'. *Day for Night* or *La nuit américaine* (François Truffaut, 1973).

New Wave directors loved to play with the seemingly infinite possibilities of editing, camerawork, sound, and mise-en-scène. In Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* (*Tirez sur le pianiste*, 1960) a character swears that he is telling the truth. He asserts "may my mother drop dead if I'm not telling the truth." Truffaut then cuts to a shot of an older woman, presumably the mother, keeling over.

They also loved to quote from their favorite films. Both Godard and Truffaut, for example, had characters in films refer to a particular favorite, Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954), a Republic western which starred Joan Crawford and Mercedes McCambridge. Such references stressed the links to film history, ignoring allusions to other arts. Godard shocked mainstream critics of the day by often asserting that the cinema is Nicholas Ray.

New Wave films told stories, but in a manner which was quite different from the Classical Hollywood narrative. New Wave characters behaved with very little consistency. Why does Michael (Jean-Paul Belmondo) in Godard's *Breathless* act the way he does? A Hollywood version of the "same" film, made in 1983 starring Richard Gere, carefully motivated Michael's actions; in Godard's film he just seems to wander, drift, and engage the world at the spur of the moment. The narrative sequences do not flow seamlessly into one another. A comic scene may be followed by a murder, for example. Godard made his famous jump cuts in which characters seem to "jump" from one place to another with no intermediate shots explaining that the story is now moving to another time or place. The Hollywood-trained viewer would become confused.

New Wave films rarely come to neat closure; they just end. In the Classical Hollywood Narrative, all elements of the story ought to be resolved at the end. Perhaps the most famous example of this New Wave ambiguity comes in *The 400 Blows*. Our young hero, Antoine Doinel, has run and run, at last reaching the sea. He stops and Truffaut freezes the frame of the boy's confused face. The film then ends; the viewer never learns what happens to him. There are no clues of where he will go from there.

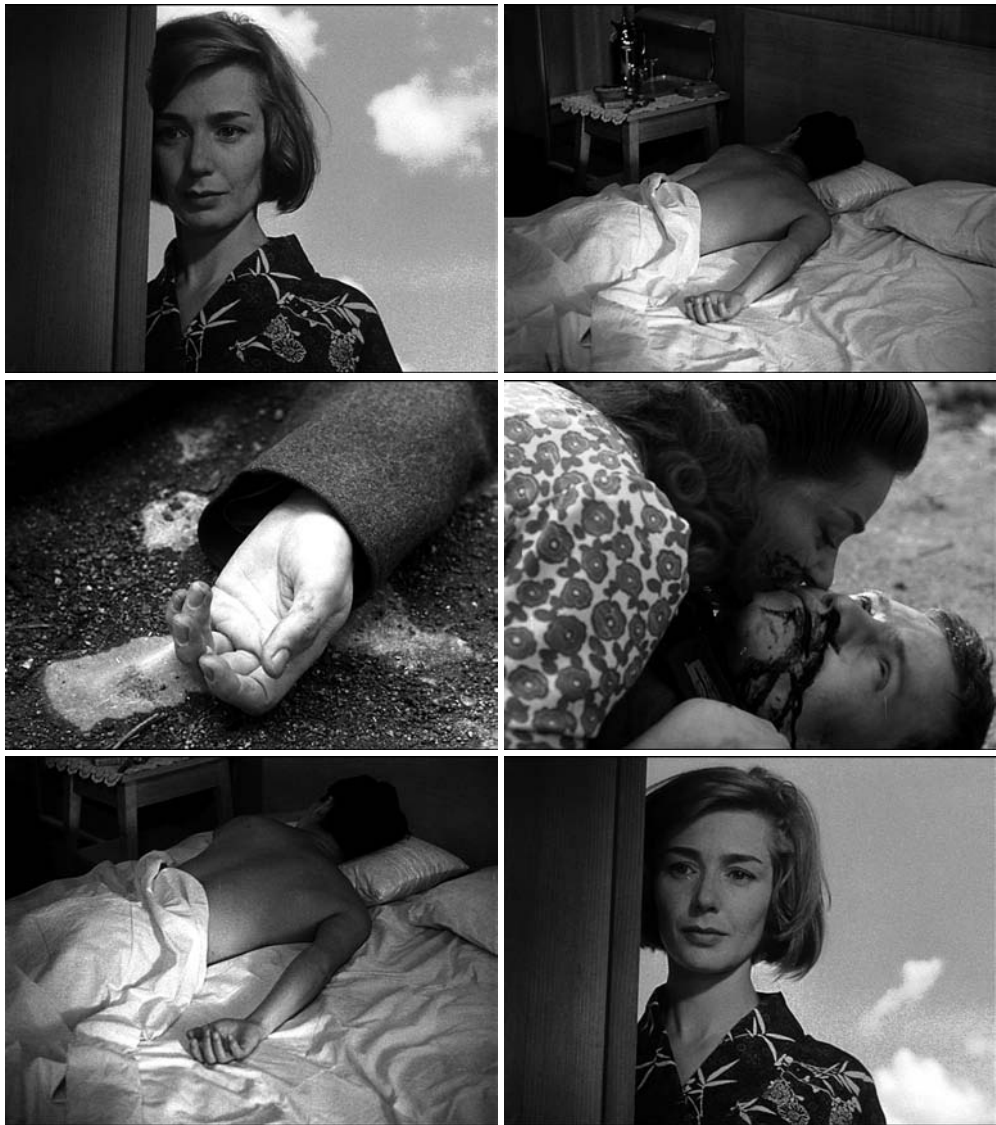
Within the New Wave narrative there is little contact between the individual and society, nor are the characters placed in any broader context within which they could be understood. Subjective and objective worlds are fused, as are fantasy and reality. The egoism of the central figures reaches a point of solipsism and so the mind set of the subject seems lost, depersonalized. Here are marginal men and women, disaffected intellectuals and students focusing on their own relationships, with no family ties or political affiliations. They move about Paris for their own pleasure; they have no long-term goal, no motivation.

A number of filmmakers worked within the New Wave, but three offered the most complex films: Alain Resnais, François Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Godard.

Three New Wave directors

Alain Resnais, a decade older than either François Truffaut or Jean-Luc Godard, came to cinema not through writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma*, but through an interest in documentary filmmaking. In his documentary films, as well as in his fiction films, Resnais was interested in the relationship between the past and present. This can be seen best in a 32-minute compilation film *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955) in which Resnais alternates between black-and-white newsreel footage of the Nazi death camp Auschwitz and color footage that Resnais filmed in 1955. *Cahiers* praised it; French authorities tried to censor it.

In 1958, Resnais directed his first feature; *Hiroshima mon amour* tells of a love affair juxtaposed with the memories of the bomb at Hiroshima which helped end the Second World War. A casual romantic encounter between a Japanese architect ("He") and a French actress ("She") working in Hiroshima on a film about peace provides their loose narrative basis for an exploration of the nature of memory, reality, and experience. The love affair is important because it triggers the memories, as "She" gradually discloses the story of an earlier love affair, a tale she has told no one of before. During World War II, in France "She" fell in love with a German soldier who was later killed. Because of her "collaboration," "She" was humiliated and imprisoned. Through editing and an emphasis on formal repetition, Resnais constructed complex conjunctions of past and present, fantasy and reality, and tried to join what are usually considered distinct parts of the human experience. In *Hiroshima mon amour* the quivering hand of the woman's sleeping Japanese lover in the story's present is directly followed by an almost identical image of her former German lover.



11.4 Shots from *Hiroshima mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959). The sight of her sleeping lover evokes memories of her earlier love affair.

Hiroshima mon amour was heralded in its day because it exemplified a modernist aesthetics, rejecting linear causal narrative progression, constructing “characters” as only human representations, and continually asking the viewer to question what we know, what we understand, and indeed what we are seeing on the screen. Resnais would extend the similar themes and filmic experimentation to an even greater degree in *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L’année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961). Based on a screenplay by the major French literary figure, Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Last Year at Marienbad* tells the loosest of stories with characters only named “X” and “A,” a man and woman who seem to be lost in a baroque palace setting. *Last Year at Marienbad* offers a profoundly ambiguous mixture of an individual’s real and imagined past and present, but we are never sure which is which.

A radical feature of the film is its frequent number of flashbacks and flash forwards, which may just be subjective visions of either “A” or “X.” We can never be sure. At times descriptions by the characters do not

correspond with what has been seen on the screen. The film is about the process of understanding reality. Its major theme seems to be an exploration of how people “construct” reality. But it also asks us to ponder the nature of art and artifice. In other words, how do we seek to understand the art of the cinema, indeed the very film we are watching? *Last Year at Marienbad* provided a watershed because it stood as a serious, complex art work, one which critics of the more traditional arts could not simply dismiss as “just another movie.” Thanks largely to *Last Year at Marienbad*, filmmakers seemed to be free to follow the basic tenet of modernism in the arts and explore the nature of their medium as other modern artists had done before them.

François Truffaut stood at the heart of the French New Wave movement. He was the most outspoken of the young film critics for *Cahiers du Cinéma* who loudly proclaimed their opposition to the French studio filmmaking conditions. He heralded the idea of the *politique des auteurs* (the auteur theory). Truffaut learned his craft at the feet of many masters in the viewing room at the Cinémathèque. He is a traditionalist, in the end making no radical formal break like Resnais. It was thus not surprising that at the end of his career Truffaut would end up in Hollywood, as part of the studio system.

In the late 1950s Truffaut made several short films, including *Une Visite* (1955) (meaning a visit), with Alain Resnais, served as an apprentice to Roberto Rossellini, the Italian filmmaker so admired by the New Wave, and worked on the script of Godard’s pioneering first work *Breathless*. It was not surprising that he then “burst” on the scene with *The 400 Blows* in 1959. As the “enfant terrible” of French film criticism, he was barred from the Cannes Film festival of 1958. In 1959 he won the best director award at Cannes for *The 400 Blows*.

Although he worked on other films, *The 400 Blows* is recognized as his first important film. It is a tale of an adolescent, Antoine Dniel, who struggles with the constrictions of 1950s French society and flees to face an uncertain future. The film took on all the traits of the French New Wave aesthetic and became popular with serious film enthusiasts around the world because it was far more accessible than *Hiroshima mon amour*.

Truffaut went on to make five more films using this same character, played by the same actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud: *Love at Twenty* (*L’Amour à vingt ans*, 1962), *Stolen Kisses* (*Baisers volés*, 1968), *Bed and Board* (*Domicile conjugal*, 1970), and *Love on the Run* (*L’Amour en fuite*, 1979). Over nearly two decades, Dniel as a movie character, and actor Léaud grew up together through these films. This proved an extended biography and appealed to a generation of French New Wave enthusiasts.

In his other films Truffaut explored the boundaries of art and life, fact and fiction. Two of his early films, *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Jules and Jim* (*Jules et Jim*, 1961) see their main characters try to turn themselves into fictional figures. Both confront the forces of life through escape into a “better” world of fiction. Both proved follow-up hits to *The 400 Blows*.

Jules and Jim made Truffaut an international celebrity with a film many still consider his best. The first third of the film contains a plethora of cinematographic and editing effects from stop frames to swish pans to jump cuts. The music, the joyful play of shape and design, and the expanded use of CinemaScope make this film a delight. In retrospect, *Jules and Jim* offered no radical break, but a re-examination of Hollywood and traditional French filmic conventions. It tears them apart and remakes them, but with a new truthful look at the world.

Through the 1960s and 1970s Truffaut went on to explore the differences between fact and fiction, reality and Hollywood, in a number of different ways. His *The Bride Wore Black* (*La mariée était en noir*, 1967)



11.5 Shots from *Jules et Jim* (François Truffaut, 1962). 1–3: Catherine's face from different distances and different angles. 4–6: Dissolve. 7–11: Whip pan.

offered a deliberate elegy to Hitchcock. *Fahrenheit 451* explored a society in which written fiction, in the form of books, was purposely destroyed. But the best of these films probably remains *Day for Night*, the film about making movies. This self-reflexive piece is one of the most complex, striking works about the anguishes of being a movie director. *Day for Night* captures the various ways in which films employ artifice to capture and convey illusion in the Classical Hollywood manner. In the film, Truffaut plays a film director, frustrated with the joys and travails of filmmaking, contemplating his craft as did Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini with *8½* (1963) and Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman with *Persona* (1966), as analyzed below.

The other major concern in Truffaut's work emerges from his interest in the process of education and learning. This is evident early on in the carefully crafted school room sequences in *The 400 Blows*, but is explicitly addressed in *The Wild Child* (*L'Enfant sauvage*, 1969), and *Small Change* (*L'Argent de poche*, 1976). The former explores the tale of a child who was abandoned in the forest and apparently raised by wild animals. Truffaut plays the teacher-scientist who carefully tries to teach the boy the ways of civilization. *Small Change* examines a child's life at school and his relationships with adults and other children. This portrait, from a man who savaged the French school system in *The 400 Blows*, offers a more reflective portrait, one in which parents are seen as doing the best they can.

Truffaut, unlike his contemporary Jean-Luc Godard, stuck to his basic interests as first explored in *The 400 Blows*. As the techniques and concerns of the New Wave became absorbed into mainstream international filmmaking, Truffaut became one of the most important and famous filmmakers in the world. He continued

to explore the themes of art and life, film and fiction, education and the ways of civilization, in traditional liberal humanist territory. He seems to lay out his position on the world most clearly in *The Last Metro* (*Le dernier métro*, 1980) in which he examines a theater troupe in occupied Paris. He seems to confess that he must make art in the way he knows how, committed to a certain formal excellence.

Jean-Luc Godard took a very different career path than did Truffaut. Both started with the French New Wave aesthetic, but as Truffaut moved toward Hollywood, Godard moved away from any semblance of mainstream filmmaking. By 1970 he abandoned the concerns which gave rise to the New Wave movement and reasoned that cinema should be a tool to assist a radical transformation of the world. Godard challenged the world directly, looking to strip away its basic assumptions, demanding a new and different form of politics, economics, communication, and filmmaking. Film could provide the impetus for this necessary revolution.

Godard's first feature film *Breathless* (1960) has long been considered the film which set the New Wave in motion because of his new style and different way of production. But quickly he turned to a more radical style with *A Married Woman* (*Une femme mariée*, 1964), *Masculine, Feminine* (1966), and *Weekend* (1968), all of which challenged not only Hollywood but also the tenets of the French New Wave which had been considered "so radical" a few years earlier. His career as a French New Wave director can best be understood as the first of three phases of a most productive career still in progress as the twenty-first century commenced. *Breathless* to *Weekend* (1959 to 1968) define his period of the French New Wave. In 1968, the final caption in *Weekend* announced "Fin de Cinéma" (the end of cinema), and correctly proclaims the beginning of Godard as a political radical.

Breathless proved not only an artistic success, but also a financial one. It cost so little because Godard wrote the screenplay, directed it, and edited it, with the help of friends like Truffaut and the extraordinary camera operator on the early films, Raoul Coutard. On the surface, *Breathless* offers an homage to Hollywood through a plot based on a conventional gangster film. The film's hero, Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo), models himself on Humphrey Bogart, through gesture, costume, and even identifying with the ever present posters of Bogart he sees throughout Paris.

The film's style, with a subjective point of view, underscored by handheld camera shots, underpins the degree of individual freedom praised by the New Wave. *Breathless* offers a new look by defying continuity editing (with long-take sequences and jump cutting). Its free wheeling camera style becomes a characteristic trait of the New Wave. The film style celebrates the possibilities of new the light-weight cameras, the constraints of low budgets, the richness of location shooting throughout Paris, and the use



11.6 Shots from *Breathless* or *À bout de souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960). Jean-Paul Belmondo looks at a poster of *The Harder They Fall*, starring Humphrey Bogart.

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of new young non-movie stars. But in this first work Godard stuck to convention and had Michel die in the end, betrayed by his American girlfriend Patricia (Jean Seberg).

Godard would make two dozen films before *Weekend*. The seeds of change, however, can be seen in nearly all subsequent films after *Breathless*. Gradually, he worked toward a more radical style, while still clinging to traits of the New Wave. *Band of Outsiders* (*Bande à part*, 1964) is based on the conventions of a Hollywood thriller where Godard stripped the “plot” down to its bare essentials, knowing his audience knew how it should turn out. He offered a critique of the thriller, so as to remind the audience that they are watching a film, not real life. *Alphaville* (1965) presents a similar critique of the cinema, here within the science fiction genre. This story unfolds in a utopian world of the future where a totalitarian system of government rules. Individuality and personal expressions do not exist anymore, people have become numbers. Godard stresses that this world of the future is not so far away.

Alphaville continued Godard’s interest in references to the over-reaching influences of films in particular and cultural artifacts in general. The star Eddie Constantine was a popular actor in the French cinema, especially in roles as a gangster. One can also find traces of the work of filmmaker/poet Jean Cocteau, and passages which seem straight out of the novels of Franz Kafka, even references to Nazi icons controlling Paris as an allusion to a totalitarian system from the very near past.

By 1965 Godard had evolved a long way from his playful New Wave origins. In *Pierrot le fou* his gangster film plot has become ever thinner, almost non-existent. The film seems to be more about the cinema, in particular the effects of CinemaScope and color, than character development or narrative resolution. *Pierrot le fou*, one of Godard’s most popular of his 1960s films, pushed the manipulation of cinematic codes to an extreme while still not advocating a complete radical break. Gradually, during the mid-1960s, Godard took this one step further, inspired by the aesthetic theories of playwright Bertolt Brecht, and argued that a social message lay at the heart of this desire for true freedom. In *Masculine, Feminine* the core of the film centers around the relationship of the political and personal. *Masculine, Feminine* is divided into sections or “acts” which denote Godard’s increasing interest in dramatist’s Bertolt Brecht’s theories of epic theater and distancing of the spectator from the art work. Interviews are spaced through the film to remind the viewer that this is an art work, not some natural symbol of the truth.

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) was a multi-talented French poet, novelist, playwright, art painter and filmmaker. His films include *The Blood of a Poet* (*Le sang d’un poète*, 1930) and *Orpheus* (*Orphée*, 1949).

Bertolt Brecht and the Epic Theater (1891–1956)

German playwright and theater director regarded as the major theoretician of the epic theater.

Brecht wanted audiences not to get emotionally involved and used the so-called *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect) to encourage audiences to relate theatrical events with real life in order to change the social and economic system.

The general thrust of this phase of Godard’s career found him foregrounding the very process of telling stories on film. He dissolved the usual distinctions (always loosely maintained by the rest of the New Wave) between fiction and documentary, actor and character, and narrative and experimental films. People appeared as themselves in works of fiction, actors directly addressed the camera in monologues, and the viewers were constantly reminded that what they were watching was a movie, made from celluloid by people. So in *A Married Woman* he turned the image from negative to positive; in *Two or Three Things I*

Know About Her (*Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, 1967) he turned off the sound track; in *La Chinoise* (1967) he showed the clapper-board on screen. All these actions would be considered “mistakes” in Hollywood. Godard sought to remind the viewer that he had made the film; he could make the rules.

In the 1967 release of *Weekend*, Godard fashioned a very complex film, one which shatters the notion of cinema as pleasure production and individual expression. The film is filled with printed captions, digressions, direct address, and camera techniques to remind the viewer that they are seeing movements of a camera. This is an open modernist text, forcing the viewer to go outside the film to learn. His career as a French New Wave filmmaker was over. Godard chose to become a modernist Marxist filmmaker.

After the political events of 1968 in Paris, the members of the New Wave went their own separate ways. François Truffaut became acknowledged in mainstream circles as the heart of accepted French cinema. Godard moved away from the mainstream, setting up an experimental film and video studio in Switzerland in which he sought to make works which would upset the new status quo and critique the capitalist system which was still at the heart of the French film business. The French New Wave in its day had made a substantial contribution to the art cinema of the television era.



11.7 Shots from *Weekend* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967), stressing the construction of the film.

Paris 1968 was the high point of left-orientated student protests in the US and Europe against consumerism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, military interventions in developing countries. The Paris student protest in May 1968 led to one of the largest laborers' strikes in France.

GERMAN CINEMA AFTER WORLD WAR II

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the German cinema experienced a “rebirth.” It had been a long struggle since the end of the Second World War. The period from 1945, with the surrender to the Allies, to the early 1960s was one of slow transition. In order to control Germany and to break with the Nazi legacy, the Allies (the United States, England, France, and the former Soviet Union) divided Germany into four zones. Soon however the strong ideological differences between the Allies led to a separation of Germany into two countries: the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany), controlled by England, France and the USA, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany), controlled by the former Soviet Union.

The Allies believed that the German people needed to be re-educated and used film (and other media) to get rid of the Nazi ideology. Right after the end of the war the Allies took control of all German film activities. All films – old and new – were screened to check if they conveyed the right message. In 1949 the film industry set up the Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (Film Industry’s Voluntary Self Control). The FSK censored all films before release on the West German market until 1972 to reflect the opinions of Konrad Adenauer, a fierce anti-communist. Adenauer’s tenure in office led to economic prosperity and

Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) was a German statesman and the first Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) from September 1949 until October 1963.

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relative political stability. But this came at a price. The 1950s saw a staid era of domestic harmony marked by a fear of non-conformity. The German film industry became an extension of Hollywood. Unlike France, West Germany had no quotas; Hollywood films were shown everywhere in West Germany, thus choking the development of any native industry.

Konrad Adenauer did try to assist West German film production in two ways. First, Adenauer helped secure loans to film producers and stimulated small-scale productions as an alternative to Hollywood. Of course this was also a clever way of controlling the content of films. Second, Adenauer initiated attempts to revive the once-giant UFA studio. But this effort floundered. Even with government backing, UFA could not compete with Hollywood and by 1962 the once mighty UFA was out of business.

The production of German films was in the hands of many small companies, who sought to produce films that would cater to the tastes of mass audiences. The most popular film genre of the 1950s was the *Heimatfilm* (the Homeland film). Over 300 such films were made between 1947 and 1960, an estimated one-fifth of the entire West German output. The Homeland films offered comforting images of green fields untouched by the ravages of bombing, mountain villages strongly linked to the past, and picture postcard panoramas of a by-gone era. Films, such as Hans Deppe's *Black Forest Girl* (*Schwarzwaldmädel*, 1950) and *The Heath is Green* (*Grün ist die Heide*, 1951), soothed audiences whose daily life was actually a constant struggle.

Literary adaptations from safe, middle-class literature also abounded. These German films – called *Verfilmungen* – originated with novels from by-gone eras which centered on polite civility and domestic tranquillity. For example, the novels of Thomas Mann provided the source for costume films peopled by popular stars and graced by high production values. Nostalgia can also be seen in the extraordinary number of remakes. A popular comedy such as *The White Horse Inn* (*Im weissen Rössl*), originally made in 1935, was remade twice: in 1952 and 1960. War films concentrated on the glories of the past. So Paul May's popular three-part *08/15* (1954–1955) helped reinstate soldiering as an admirable modern calling, carefully distinguishing the glories of the average infantry soldier from the evil leadership of the Nazi era.



11.8 *Grün ist die Heide* or *The Heath is Green* (Hans Deppe, 1951).

The West German government encouraged those who fled the Nazis to come back and work. Robert Siodmak's return in the mid-1950s sparked great interest. He had gained renown in Hollywood with such thrillers as *Phantom Lady* (1943) and *The Spiral Staircase* (1945). Of his half-dozen efforts in the 1950s and early 1960s, the most successful was *The Devil Strikes at Night* (*Nachts wenn der Teufel kam*, 1957) which received several prizes. He cleverly meshed his heritage of German Expressionist style with an oblique commentary on the rampant materialism of the 1950s in West Germany, all in high contrast lighting, with darkened stairwells, frenzied faces and non-traditional camera angles in a story of Nazi cover-up and greed.

Fritz Lang returned to Germany to make his last film, *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (*Die 1000 Augen des Dr. Mabuse*, 1960). In the guise of a pulp B thriller he created a self-reflexive modernist film concerned with the nature of film narrative, and the penchant for voyeurism. *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* provided a link back to an earlier Lang Mabuse film (*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, 1932), which criticized

the Nazis. This would be Lang's only film in modern Germany. He would remain most famous for his work in Hollywood from 1936 to 1957 as well as his pre-Nazi German films such as *Metropolis* (1927).

NEW GERMAN CINEMA

In February 1962 the Oberhausen Manifesto, presented at the Eighth Annual Oberhausen Film Festival, sparked new life into the West German cinema scene. This declaration by 26 young filmmakers stated that many young German film authors, directors, and producers had gained international recognition at film festivals all around the world and that these youngsters had created a new film language. The new filmmakers claimed freedom and opposed the restrictions of film production conventions, which they felt led to commercial entities and patronizing pressure groups. Their maxim became: "The old film is dead. We believe in a new one."

Alexander Kluge, the new German film's most articulate defender, stressed the role of film to explore reality, to document everyday life, and to free West Germany from occupation (read Hollywood) influences. The filmmakers who had signed the Oberhausen Manifesto became known as the Young German Cinema. They initiated a New Wave for German directors and paved the way for the careers of filmmakers like Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, and Wim Wenders. The Young German Cinema changed the German attitude towards art film, and the next generation – the New German Cinema of Fassbinder, Herzog, and Wenders – profited from this changing of the role of film in West German culture.

The Young German Cinema put film onto the agenda of the cultural elite and convinced the West German government that a new state subsidy structure was needed. The new government that replaced Adenauer in 1963 recognized that the film policies of the 1950s had not worked and announced new ways of subsidizing film. In the following years, film gradually came to be regarded as one of the arts and was treated in the same way as literature, theater, and music. In February 1965, the Ministry of Interior set up the Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film (Board of Curators of Young German Film) to supply monies for the initial works of the Young German Cinema. After 1969 the individual provinces such as Bavaria and North-Rhine Westphalia created film funds and used them as a means of regional development. As a result it became much easier for filmmakers to get backing for their projects.

The film academies of Ulm (1962), West Berlin (1966), and Munich (1967) were opened. At the same time, film archives were also established. During the 1970s small locally-funded, art-house cinemas were opened which slowly improved the exhibition possibilities for German art films. Distribution across West Germany became possible in the face of Hollywood.

In 1963 the public broadcast TV company ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, Second German Television) commenced screenings of a television program that would become an important venue for film presentation: "Das Kleine Fernsehspiel" ("The Short Television Play"). The program became a safe place for experiments because no pressure was put on filmmakers to maximize audiences. "Das Kleine Fernsehspiel" provided many young filmmakers with money to make their first movie and a national television audience for their films.

In 1974, public television became an important distribution channel for German films. The Television Framework Agreement – an agreement between the Film Subsidy Board and public television networks – generated substantial monies for filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition. In West Germany, television was not just stealing away audiences from movie theaters; it also brought in audiences for alternative

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film projects that would otherwise never have been made or distributed. This was important for the development of new talent.

However, the international recognition of young filmmakers like Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, Jean-Marie Straub, and Daniele Huillet proved equally important. In 1966 all eyes looked to German filmmakers when Volker Schlöndorff's *Young Torless* (*Der junge Törless*, 1966) earned the International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, Peter Schamoni's *No Shooting Time for Foxes* (*Schonzeit für Füchse*, 1966) gained the Silver Bear at Berlin, and Alexander Kluge's *Yesterday Girl* (*Abschied von Gestern*, 1966) received the Silver Lion at Venice. The West German authorities as well as organizations like the Goethe Institute – established to promote German culture abroad – started to arrange special screenings of these films.

Then in stepped Werner Herzog, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Wim Wenders. They became the symbols of the new generation of German filmmakers and were soon referred to as the New German Cinema. This trio (and others) provided critical voices that commented on society and analyzed Germany's contaminated past.

Three New German Cinema directors

Rainer Werner Fassbinder became one of the hardest working, most prolific of the New German Cinema directors. During his short life (1945–1982), he directed 33 feature films and several television series, among which stands his impressive 14-part “Berlin Alexanderplatz” (1980). He also performed regularly as an actor. Being an auteur in the truest sense of the word, Fassbinder often wrote his own scripts and was involved in the editing of his films. Fassbinder turned low budgets into creative virtues. For example, the lack of contrast in lighting in *Love Is Colder Than Death* (*Liebe ist kälter als der Tod*, 1969) creates a world in which there are no shadows, no place to hide. The long static takes and the sparse decor of his *Katzelmacher* (1969) (the title is never translated but means “rowdy character”) underline a world of the disenchanting within the confines of Germany's provinces.

During the 1970s, Fassbinder was inspired by the melodramas of Douglas Sirk. *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (*Die Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*, 1972) was the first in a series of melodramas and brought Fassbinder his first success with larger audiences. Another (international) success was *Fontane Effi Briest* (*Effi Briest*, 1974), an adaptation of the Theodor Fontane novel of the same name. Hanna Schygulla played Effi Briest, the young girl married to a husband 20 years older, whom she feared and later betrayed. Hanna Schygulla was one of Fassbinder's favorite actresses. She also appeared in his films on German history. In *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (*Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, 1979), for example, she plays Maria, a woman



11.9 Shots from *Katzelmacher* expressing emptiness and emotional distance between the characters (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1969).

waiting for her husband to return from the war. Meanwhile she allows her boss Oswald to take care of her in return for sex. When her husband returns and finds her in the arms of Oswald, he flies into a rage and tries to kill him. Maria finishes the job for him but her husband goes to jail instead. When he is finally released she blows up the house, killing herself and her husband.

The Marriage of Maria Braun was perceived in 1979 as a critique on West Germany's economic development. While all efforts were directed towards the rebuilding of the country and economic progress, love and compassion were ignored leading to a society that might prosper but in the end would explode. *The Marriage of Maria Braun* was a commercial and artistic success. Together with *Lola* (1981) and *Veronika Voss* (*Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss*, 1982) this film comprised a trilogy on



11.10 Hanna Schygulla in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* or *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1979).

post-war Germany, called the Federal Republic of Germany trilogy. Fassbinder's death in 1982 at age 37 is perceived as the end of the New German Cinema as the momentum of the new generation filmmakers faded away. But other directors' careers continued beyond this date, as outlined below.

Wim Wenders, also born in 1945, graduated from the Munich Academy for Television and Film. Wenders was deeply interested in Hollywood films but at the same time disconcerted with Hollywood's domination in the German cinemas. His cryptic adaptation of Peter Handke's crime novel, *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, (*Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, 1971), is full of references to the American cultural presence in West Germany, including, for example, the ever blaring popular music and references to Howard Hawks' *Red Line 7000* (1965) (the film title is advertised on a cinema) and Don Siegel's *Madigan* (1968). *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick* traces a few days in the life of a former soccer player who has murdered a cashier at a movie house. Like many of Wenders' other films, this crime film is not structured as a Classical Hollywood movie. There is no strong character motivation and the plot holds many loose ends.

Paris, Texas (1984) remains Wenders' most well known and often favored film. Shot in the USA for Hollywood's Twentieth Century-Fox, it tells the story of a man in search of his family. Wenders' masterful filmmaking combined color and music. The beautiful shots of empty American landscapes and the seemingly endless and wide country were acclaimed by critics around the world. Wenders based it upon his favorite Hollywood film, John Ford's *The Searchers*. *Paris, Texas* won the Golden Palm in Cannes.

Three years later Wenders' film *Wings of Desire* (*Der Himmel über Berlin*, 1987) was also honoured with the Golden Palm. The opening of the film brings us right to the heart of the film. A hand is shown writing a poem by Peter Handke and a voice-over reads it aloud. It praises the ability of children to enjoy the small things in life. Then we are introduced to two angels, who travel through time and space watching history go by. One of the angels wants to end his eternal journey and become a human being to be able to smell, see colors, and feel the rain. The camera smoothly hovers over Berlin and shows what spectacular views the angels have. The film starts in black and white, but once the angel has become human his tale continues in color.

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Wenders always considered music an integral part of his movies and often worked closely with musicians. In *Wings of Desire* the underground musician Nick Cave appears very prominently with his band Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. In 1999 Wenders made *Buena Vista Social Club*, a heart warming documentary on aged Cuban musicians. Bono – from the world famous band U2 – was involved in *The Million Dollar Hotel* (2000). He wrote and performed some of the best musical parts of the movie. Wenders' move into international filmmaking gave an enormous boost to the German New Wave.

Werner Herzog ranked as the third significant member of the New German Cinema. His feature debut, *Signs of Life* (*Lebenszeichen*, 1968), earned him a State Film prize and considerable attention. *Signs of Life* began Herzog's interest in landscape detail, psychological change, and life lived at the edge. Herzog worked closely with one of West Germany's most eccentric actors Klaus Kinski. The extravagant behavior of Kinski often accompanied with outbursts of rage caused many delays. In 1999 Herzog even dealt with his love and hate for the genius of Kinski in *My Best Fiend* (*Mein liebster Feind*). Kinski's first film with Herzog was *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (*Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes*, 1972). This story about Spanish Conquistadores searching in vain in the Peruvian jungle for a golden treasure was co-produced with a German television station and aired on television before it got to the cinemas.

After that Kinski starred in four more of Herzog's films: *Woyzeck* (1979), the remake of Murnau's *Nosferatu*: *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (*Nosferatu – Phantom der Nacht*) (1978), the mega project *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), and *Cobra Verde* (1987). *Fitzcarraldo* was also shot in the Peruvian jungle and became infamous for the enormous problems Herzog encountered during the shooting. The staging of the extravagant ideas of his main character – building an opera house in the jungle and moving a complete steam ship over the mountains to avoid the wrong current of the river – almost caused the whole project's premature end. Herzog's intended star actor Jack Nicholson called off the deal and financiers started to withdraw. Herzog,



11.11 Shots from *Wings of Desire* or *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wim Wenders, 1987). The transformation of Damiel (Bruno Ganz, left) from an angel into a human being.

however, overcame all these difficulties only to find a lukewarm audience response. *Cobra Verde* (1987) was the last film Kinski made with Herzog.

The 1970s would be a decade of great success for the New German Cinema. The works of Wenders, Fassbinder, and Herzog gained an international following, complete with homages in Paris, London, and New York. They became among the most celebrated auteurs of the decade. The irony is that this praise was mostly heard abroad; at home responses were much more critical.



11.12 Klaus Kinski in *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* or *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (Werner Herzog, 1972).

The New German Cinema was not a stylistic movement in the same sense that the unified French New Wave was. The French New Wave had a set of closely associated filmmakers who worked in similar themes, conventions, and stylistic traits (at least until 1968), while the New German Cinema consisted of a talented set of directors, not works in a similar style. The term came about not to denote a unified movement, but rather to emphasize the rebirth of the German cinema after many years of fallow production after the Second World War. The filmmakers of the New German Cinema were united only in being outside the normal system of finance and distribution. Each had specific ideas about how films ought to best be made.

THE INDIVIDUAL AS INTERNATIONAL FILM ARTIST

There were many individual filmmakers considered as film authors that did not fit into a “new wave.” In France two independent French filmmakers – Jacques Tati and Robert Bresson – stood outside of the French New Wave and went their own way. In Sweden Ingmar Bergman created complex masterpieces and Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel excited many a film fan. In Italy Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Bernardo Bertolucci rank among the greatest talents the cinema has ever produced. An appreciation of the complexity of their talents continues to increase as we have moved through the television age into the era of contemporary cinema.

Jacques Tati (1907–1982) worked in film in France before, during, and after the New Wave, but always seemed to exist outside any movement. With the (barely) feature-length *Jour de Fête* (1947), Tati was first noticed as a filmmaker. Honors on the art-cinema circuit began to flow Tati’s way with the première of the first films built around his own “Mr. Hulot” character: *Monsieur Hulot’s Holiday* (*Les vacances de monsieur Hulot*, 1951), and *My Uncle* (*Mon oncle*, 1958). On the surface both appealed to audiences around the world as gentle satirical observations of the incongruities and impersonality of modern life, whether the rituals of France’s annual summer vacations or the “work-saving” gadgets imported from the United States after the Second World War.

In particular, *Monsieur Hulot’s Holiday* presents a delightful holiday week at an unnamed middle-class seaside resort. The film’s structure is remarkably symmetrical. For example, in the opening sequence the vacationers make their way to the site of fun; in the final scenes they are returning home. The story has come full circle. The film contains very little actual dialogue, but is rather an orchestration of sounds of doors squeaking, tennis balls meeting racquets, and automobiles pattering along. Tati used sounds as a way of telling the story. The viewer recognizes the noise of Hulot’s car, and the popping sounds of the tennis rackets tell how the match is developing.

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Mon Oncle was Tati's first film released in color. Hulot, the angular everyman in the tan raincoat, pipe, argyle socks, and hush puppy shoes, appears as a fully developed character for the first time. But Tati's masterwork, ten years in the making, surely has to be *Playtime* (1967), a loosely constructed tale of a group of American tourists rushing to visit a traditional Paris they never seem to find. The wry comedy grows out of Hulot's trying to help, as they all wander around a "Paris" created with a number of vast sets built outside Paris in what came to be known as "Tativille."

Again the film is remarkably structured. Consider, for example, the pattern of changing color schemes. In the first section of the film the settings and costumes are principally grays, blacks, and browns, offering a cold drab look at Paris to the scurrying tourists and denizens trying to accommodate them. By the end of *Playtime* the "same" locale has turned bright red, pink, and green, looking at times like a circus ride or glowing garden. The inhuman, inhabitable sterile city landscape has transformed into a bright receptive city of pleasure.

Jacques Tati can best be understood by comparing his use of the long shot with that found in the typical Hollywood film. Hollywood uses the long shot to establish the scene, always returning to the figures and decor found in these establishing shots. Tati, in obsessive and elusive fashion, layers deep space, offering so much information that no viewer in a single sitting could catch it all. But the overall comic effect is never lost. Tati choreographed his long shots as one might plan an intricate dance. Dialogue is minimal; the sound track is filled with rich use of noises, splats of mud, creaking briefcases, doors forever opening with more than a simple swish.

Robert Bresson (1901–1999) was another French director who came to fame during the 1950s, but worked outside the French New Wave and represents the independent film artist. Bresson achieved fame in art-house circles with *Diary of a Country Priest* (*Journal d'un curé de campagne*) in 1951. University educated in philosophy and literature, Bresson, like Tati, began to dabble in short films first during the 1930s. During World War II he spent 18 months as a prisoner, escaped, and made his first feature *Angels of the Streets* (*Les Anges du péché*, 1943). This film was a spiritual drama about a convent. Despite a moral seriousness, *Angels of the Streets* recouped its costs, as did *Ladies of the Park* (*Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, 1944), but for six years Bresson struggled to find backing for his *Diary of a Country Priest*. This thin tale of a young, dying priest in a small village is certainly not Hollywood's idea of an exciting subject for a film. The solitude of the priest and his struggles with sin and life, as seen in frequent close-ups, are articulated in a constant monologue and juxtaposed by poignant, pointed sounds. Bresson's renunciation of professional actors and actresses dates from this film, which marked the beginning of his now famous austere style, free of dynamic music or wild gestures or Hollywood excitement. Many found it almost spiritual, or religious in feeling.



11.13 The changing pattern of the color scheme in *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967).

It would be five years before Bresson, ever the perfectionist, completed his next film, *A Man Escaped* (*Un condamné à mort s'est échappé*, 1956). This modest commercial success offers a tale of a man alone in prison working to escape. Again there was precious little action, simply a man alone with his feelings and primitive desires to get away. The film was shot primarily in close-up, often in the dark. From the very title, in past tense, we know what will happen, limiting any traditional suspense. The film shows meticulous attention to detail (it was shot in an actual prison cell); the actors were non-professionals, the central figure – on screen throughout most of the 90-minute film – was played by a 27-year-old philosophy student.

Throughout this seemingly simple story, Bresson brilliantly fuses sound and image. The soundtrack keeps the viewer (and the main character Fontaine) informed of the activities, inside and outside the prison. At certain points in the film he even permits his sound track to dominate what's on the screen. The use of music, especially passages from W.A. Mozart's Mass in C Minor, seems unmotivated. After the Mass is heard over the opening credits, we do not hear it again until well into the film at the point when Fontaine walks with his fellow prisoners to empty their slop buckets. As the music plays Fontaine explains: "Empty your buckets and wash, back to your cell for the day." This juxtaposition of ceremonial religious music with the degrading routines of prison life provides a crucial reminder of the harsh life and the desire for freedom.

The unique Bressonian style continued with *Pickpocket* (1959), *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (*Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1962) *Balthazar* (*Au hazard Balthazar*, 1966), *A Gentle Woman* (*Une Femme Douce*, 1969) and his final masterpiece *Money* (*L'Argent*, 1983). Bresson has made relatively few films but always with a style admired by film purists. Bresson strived for a pure cinema, stripped of unnecessary elements. For that reason he wanted his actors and actresses not to act but just to be, speaking their lines as flat as possible. Meaning was not conveyed through acting emotions but by cutting the shots in the right order, Bresson believed.

Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007), from Sweden, may have been the most famous and visible of the art-cinema directors during the 1950s and 1960s. Thousands of cinephiles, disgruntled with Hollywood formulae, embraced Bergman's highly symbolic *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957). Here was a film and a director who took film seriously. And there was more where that came from; this Swedish director was incredibly productive. From the close of the Second World War until his announced retirement in 1982, Bergman made some 40 features as well as a number of television programs. He fashioned the careers of Max von Sydow, Bibi Andersson, and Liv Ullmann, and by 1960 stood as the prime example of the individual who could achieve international fame as a filmmaker, even from a nation as small as Sweden.

But fame did not come overnight for Bergman. It took more than a decade after the close of World War II; indeed, even during the 1950s, he would work seven months per year as a



11.14 Shots from *Pickpocket* (Robert Bresson, 1959).



11.15 Shots from *Wild Strawberries* or *Smultronstället* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957). The wild strawberries evoke memories of the past.

Lutheranism is the oldest and largest Protestant denomination, named after Martin Luther (1483–1546), a learned German monk who protested against the Catholic practice of selling indulgences to pay off one's sins.

theater director to provide a stable financial base. Most critics consider *Summer Interlude* (*Sommarlek*, 1951), *Summer with Monica* (*Sommaren med Monika*, 1953), and *Smiles of a Summer Night* (*Sommarnattens leende*, 1955) as his first important works. These are films of memory that recall moments of happiness, tranquillity, and sensual pleasure. The last is a comedy. Indeed, comedies have featured more in Ingmar Bergman's oeuvre than his intellectual image as a purveyor of Nordic gloom might suggest. For most critics his *Smiles of a Summer Night* still ranks as his best. For about \$100,000 (a fraction of what a Hollywood film cost) Bergman crafted a film which won a Special Prize at the Cannes Film Festival (for Poetic Humor), and thus lifted himself into the pantheon of international art cinema.

Smiles of a Summer Night stands as a unified work, complete with the studied elegance of a smoothly flowing camera. The cast complements each other and nearly all would later become world famous as Bergman's repertory company, including Bibi Andersson, Harriet Andersson, Ingrid Thulin, Gunnar Björnstrand, and Max von Sydow. Other comedies would follow with *A Lesson in Love* (*En lektion i kärlic*, 1956), and also in parts of *Wild Strawberries* (1957), *The Devil's Eye* (*Djävulens öga*, 1960), and *Now All About These Women* (*För att inte tala om alla dessa kvinnor*, 1964). But as he became more and more famous, subsequent comedies would become increasingly rare; Bergman tended to suffer from intense, personal preoccupations with guilt and anguish.

Indeed, films filled with gloom and symbols of frustration first drew Bergman lavish praise in the world of art cinema. He won the Golden Bear at Berlin for his portrait of an old professor who tries to come to terms with his life in *Wild Strawberries* in 1958; an Academy Award for Best Foreign

Language Film for a medieval tale of a brutal crime and sadistic retribution, *The Virgin Spring* (*Jungfrukällan*, 1960) in 1961, and another Academy Award for Best Foreign Film the next year for a story of loneliness and vulnerability in family relationships in *Through a Glass Darkly* (*Sasomi i en spegel*, 1961). By 1962, these films plus *The Seventh Seal*, had made Bergman the most noted serious filmmaker of his generation.

Most proponents of art cinema still look back to *The Seventh Seal* as one of the films which best signifies the Bergman style. Having been reared in a strict **Lutheran** family headed by a father who was a pastor, Bergman was constantly struggling with religious doubts and problems. *The Seventh Seal* is the first of three – with *The Magician* (*Ansiktet*, 1958) and *The Virgin Spring* – which helped him personally address what he considered the ugly side of religion. As the film makes clear from the beginning, the title refers to God's book of secrets fastened by seven seals; only after breaking the seventh seal will the secret of life be revealed.

As was evident from his work with comedies, there seems to be no single, unified Bergman. Consider *Wild Strawberries* (1957), which offered yet another turn in Bergman's career. Here he concentrated on psychological dilemmas and ethical issues in human and social relations. This tale of old age sees Professor and physician Isak Borg (played by noted Swedish director Victor Sjöström in his late seventies), learning of his past through a succession of dreams as he travels to Lund to receive yet another honor. His daughter-in-law rides with him on the journey, and as a new member of the family is unafraid to ask the unspoken questions. Much of the film is narrated by Professor Borg and thus comes off as an "analysis of dreams," highly influenced no doubt by **Strindberg's** *Dream Play* which Bergman had directed in the theater. The title, *Wild Strawberries*, refers to the fruit which signals rebirth in the spring for Swedes. In the film the "wild strawberries" remind Borg of his youth, of a past love.

The psychological puzzle takes a different tack in *Persona* (1966), fashioned at the height of Bergman's fame as an art-cinema director, and perhaps his most influential film. *Persona* offers a version of Brechtian analysis, a surreal treatment of dual personalities which grapples with themes of failed love and the horrors of a world seemingly self-destructing around us. It was not until *Persona* that Bergman felt he had come to grips with the dark forces of human nature which sexual urges can inspire. Indeed, Bergman claims his post-*Persona* films deal with his ceaseless fascination with women. In particular, *Persona* presents a tour-de-force distillation of a dramatic conflict between two women, Alma (Bibi Andersson), a young nurse, and Elizabeth Volger (Liv Ullmann), her patient, an actress who has withdrawn into silence. *Persona* is Bergman's most self-reflexive work. That is, it is as much about the nature of the cinema as about the fundamental problems of the two women. *Persona* announces its interest in film theory at the very beginning with an image of the ignition of an arc projector, and the threading of a film. *Persona* ends with the projector being turned off. Certainly one of the most shocking moments in Bergman's entire oeuvre comes in the middle of *Persona* when we see a film rip (or appear to rip) and then burn.

Bergman would again deal uncompromisingly with psycho-sexual relationships in *The Touch* (*Beröringen*, 1971), showing a married woman driven out her mind by an extra-marital affair; *Face to Face* (*Ansikte mot ansikte*, 1976), concerning the nervous breakdown of a cold-natured woman analyst and the hallucinations she suffers; and in a film made-for-television, but later shortened and released as a feature film, *Scenes from a Marriage* (*Scener ur ett äktenskap*, 1973), dealing with a troubled long-term relationship of a professional couple who are divorced, but unable to actually separate.

Luis Buñuel became an international celebrity with the rise of art cinema, but had been making experimental and mainstream films since he and Surrealist artist Salvador Dali unleashed their noted short, *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) (see also Chapter 4). Any close examination of his oeuvre indicates Buñuel worked far more in Mexico and France than in his native Spain. After the end of the Second World War Buñuel went to Mexico. There he began steady work in the small, but consistently productive Mexican film industry, at

August
Strindberg
(1849–1912)
was a very
influential
Swedish writer
and modern
playwright,
who started out
writing realistic
plays like *Miss
Julie* (*Fröken
Julie*, 1888).
After a nervous
breakdown in
the 1890s he
began writing
so-called
"dream plays"
(structured like
a dream) like
The Dream Play
(*Ett drömspel*,
1902).



11.16 Opening shots of *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966).

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the time it was beginning a short lived Golden Age. In 1942 the Mexican national government had created a centralized credit agency (the Banco Cinematográfico) to encourage film production. The Second World War stimulated economic activity in Mexico, as the United States aided the allied Mexican government to prevent a pro-fascist or pro-communist regime from taking over.

Buñuel directed 20 films in Mexico from 1946 to 1964. Because of the existing studio system, Buñuel most often had to work with players and scripts not of his choosing. In time he became a fast-working and efficient director, able to finish low-budget films on time. *The Young and the Damned* (*Los Olvidados*, 1950), for example, was one such low-budget effort, finished in three weeks. This film of serious social criticism won the 1951 Cannes Film Festival Prize for Best Direction, thereby placing this “new” talent (Buñuel was 51 years old) on the international art-cinematic map. But it should be stressed that *The Young and the Damned* was hardly typical of Buñuel’s efforts during this period. More typical were musicals such as *Gran Casino* (*Tampico*, 1946), and melodramas such as *Daughter of Deceit* (*La hija del engaño*, 1951) and *Death in the Garden* (*La mort en ce jardin*, 1956). He helped bring color films to Mexico in the form of a co-production with Hollywood: *Robinson Crusoe* (1952). He even did fanciful comedies such as *Mexican Busride* (*Subida al cielo*, 1951), and *Illusion Travels by Streetcar* (*La ilusión viaja en tranvía*, 1953).

Finally, he would complete his most famous work in Mexico as the nation desperately tried to hold on to its Golden Age of filmmaking. *The Exterminating Angel* (*El ángel exterminador*, 1962) offers a social satire in which a group of elegant upper-class guests are, for no clear cut reason, trapped at a formal dinner party in an elegant mansion. Their entrapment underscores a confinement to principles accepted by the bourgeoisie who Buñuel had long attacked. But as their fear and hunger take over, the hypocritical façades of the marooned group crumble and polite behavior gives way to acts of cowardice, lust, sadism, and degradation. To attack the bourgeoisie’s moral and religious hypocrisy, Buñuel employed the Surrealist weapons of surprise (through careful use of editing and *mise-en-scène*), dream imagery, bizarre gags, images of comic horror, and unexpected assaults on narrative logic and order.

The successes of such films as *The Exterminating Angel* enabled Buñuel to make his way back to Europe during the 1960s. He began making films in France, even as he continued to work in Mexico, and critics took notice. With *Viridiana* (1961) Buñuel became a director of note, an aged venerable link to an earlier era of art cinema (the Surrealist period in Europe discussed earlier in Chapter 4). The hip 1960s appreciated an art cinema which embraced a Surrealist view of the world. *Viridiana*, made in Spain, won the Best



11.17 Shots from *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* or *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (Luis Buñuel, 1972). A bizarre interruption of dinner that might have been a dream as the last shot suggests.

Film Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1961. The film contains several scenes that were considered blasphemous by the Catholic Church.

Buñuel continued his irreverent looks at the world with *Simon of the Desert* (*Simón del desierto*, 1965), *Belle de jour* (1966) (literally translated as “beauty of the day”), *The Milky Way* (*La voice lactée*, 1969), and the *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (*Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, 1972). *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film in 1972. A French, Spanish, and Italian co-production, it was shot in France. *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* tells of a carload of passengers trying to go out to dinner. But this simple journey narrative is constantly interrupted, principally by the motif of interrupted meals. Scattered about the film are four dreams, but since the “real” action is so implausible, we are not sure when dreams begin and end. This is more a film about telling stories on film, than any coherent movie tale.

Throughout Buñuel’s career the scion of Surrealism shows up – in style and theme. Even his studio work toyed with re-structuring narrative quality. The structure of his films is less tight than that of Classical Hollywood films, but still not as radical in its breaks as Godard’s work. In the 1960s, as audiences of young people began to flock to his work for its alternative social views, he became the revered aging master ceaselessly attacking the social order. To the end of his life in 1983 Buñuel maintained his jaundiced view of the world in a remarkably productive and creative career.

Federico Fellini had begun his career as part of Italy’s Neo-realism movement. As the Neo-realists’ reaction to the events of World War II fully played out and the Italian economy returned to normal, perhaps it was inevitable that the Italian cinema would return to its commercial roots. Hollywood controlled the world market for filmmaking and the powers of the cinema industry in Italy began to actively solicit American co-productions. Shooting in Italy saved Hollywood money; for the Italian film industry, it meant jobs. Hollywood could also take advantage of “frozen” currency tied up because of Italian export laws.

The Hollywood invasion has been labeled a crisis in Neo-realism by some, but in fact was just a transition to another era of Italian filmmaking, one which would see its greatest international fame and its participation in art cinema. Crucial to this transition were a number of the early films of Federico Fellini such as *I vitelloni* (1953) (Fellini came up with the word “vitelloni” which means something like “big calves”), which continued the Neo-realist interest in social problems. *I vitelloni* offered a portrait of six provincial characters. For a true Neo-realist these six figures would have been the jumping-off point for a condemnation of society’s ills. Fellini instead concerned himself with the clash of illusion and reality in the dreary life of these characters.

This implicit interest in a private symbolism looms even larger in two films which established his reputation as a master of international art cinema: *La Strada* (*The Road*, 1954), and *Nights of Cabiria*. In both works, Fellini moved beyond an interest in the reality of Italian life to a more personal vision, one concerned with spiritual poverty



11.18 Anita Ekberg and Marcello Mastroianni in *La Dolce Vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960).

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and the necessity for grace and salvation. *La Strada* won more than 50 international awards including the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival, the New York Film Critics Award, and the Academy Award as Best Foreign Language Film.

Via Veneto is one of the famous and expansive avenues of Rome (Italy). Its full name is Via Vittorio Veneto named after the battle that took place in the First World War. One can still find a sign to show where Fellini shot his La Dolce Vita.

In *La Dolce Vita* Fellini transforms the tinsel world of Rome's **Via Veneto** and the paparazzi searching for photos of stars and starlets into a metaphor for an entire civilization. Set against the magnificent ruins of earlier times (classical Rome, Christian Rome, baroque Rome), Fellini shows us a culture based on meaningless intellectual debates, sterile love affairs, and publicity stunts. In other words, he examines the negative influences Hollywood brought to Italy as it sought more film dollars. But Fellini is no bitter outsider here as Buñuel was, for he understood he was an accomplice in bringing Hollywood to Rome.

Indeed, the image of Hollywood in *La Dolce Vita* was not all bad. Sylvia (Anita Ekberg), the sensual Hollywood actress in Rome to make a film, seems to embody American eagerness while Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni) just goes along with the flow of life. For critics Fellini created a seemingly endless string of symbols within this story of cultural clash. Consider the famous sequence in which Sylvia wades in the Trevi Fountain in Rome. Her joy and energy and celebration contrast with Marcello who only embraces her after the water stops flowing.

Through the 1960s Fellini became increasingly preoccupied with his role as an international filmmaker, and as a result, his autobiographical manifestations in his films became more introspective. Many saw *8½* as simply a self-indulgent but thoroughly creative attempt to fill a void in a director's filmmaking career which had reached a certain end with *La Dolce Vita*. But today it is seen as a classic example of the filmmaker seriously taking on the tenets of his own creative process. *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965), Fellini's next film, served almost as a sequel to *8½* since it examined the psychological struggles of his wife. Both films, therefore, explored the same problems from different sexual perspectives, while on a deeper autobiographical plane, the two character studies express and explore two different sides of Fellini's mythic ego.

Subsequent films, while complex with flamboyant imagery and often popular with critics and the art-cinema-going public, never matched these earlier efforts. Fellini continued to work, principally for television, but without the influence he had during the 1960s as a major figure in the world of international art cinema.

Fellini focused international interest on this new Italian cinema, and during the decade of the 1960s the Italians achieved a reputation that nearly equalled the French New Wave. But this was no Italian new wave, but rather a collection of filmmakers working independently in Italy, making films for an international market.

Michelangelo Antonioni also started his film career in the Italian Neo-realist era, but like Fellini achieved his greatest fame after that movement ended. Antonioni became a star of international art cinema with *L'Avventura* (1960), assisted by the intense discussions on the meaning of the film at the Cannes Film Festival of 1960. Festival attendees did not know what to make of a film so elliptical in style, so mysterious in theme. *L'Avventura*, an Italian-French co-production starring Monica Vitti, presented an unprepared viewer with a loosely told story of a couple who are traveling among the islands of Sicily when the woman disappears. Her husband and friends search for her but in the end never find her. The lack of a closure of the film drew the wrath of critics at Cannes in 1960. It was acceptable to make an art film, but it should tell a coherent story, with a beginning, middle and *end*. A number of critics declared *L'Avventura* monotonous and boring, yet it became an international success as an art film.

For his next two films, which followed similar themes and stylistic traits, Antonioni was able to employ several of the major stars of international art cinema: Jeanne Moreau, Marcello Mastroianni, Monica

Vitti, and Alain Delon. *La Notte* (1961) featured Moreau and Mastroianni as a couple confronting the stresses of their marriage without finding any real solution. Hollywood would have provided an appropriate happy ending; Antonioni again provided no closure. The final film of this so-called trilogy, *Eclipse* (*L'Eclisse*, 1962), starring Vitti and Delon, featured the modern couple confronting the stresses of their marriage and not finding any real solution. All three films are formally beautiful, with one stunning composition after another. They employ natural time, offering a pacing unfamiliar to traditional Hollywood-trained viewers.

The Red Desert (*Il Deserto Rosso*, 1964) saw Antonioni work in color for the first time. (Again like Tati and Bresson, he came late to this innovation which was commonplace in Hollywood films by the mid-1960s.) *The Red Desert* presents yet another portrait of neurotic crisis, in a pictorial frame of stunning beauty, here with elegant subdued colors, in particular reds and greens. However one judges the experimental narrative qualities of the film, it must be judged a remarkable step in the use of color cinematography.

But then Antonioni's career took a significant turn. He moved abroad, and made *Blow-up* (1967) in England for MGM, a film capturing the pop scene in London of the 1960s. *Blow-up* tells an only slightly elliptical tale of a photographer who thinks he has discovered a murder amidst his photographs. In the hip 1960s *Blow-up* was a major international hit, and crossed over into the mainstream cinema. Although this was sold to an unsuspecting public as a mystery story, in the end it is a study of the illusions inherent in the photographic image.

Antonioni took the next logical step and journeyed to Hollywood to make *Zabriskie Point* (1970). For most critics this marked the end of significant interest in Antonioni's work. They considered him as another European who had been lured to Hollywood, promised fame and fortune, achieved neither, and fled back to his native land to never again match the work from earlier in his career.

Bernardo Bertolucci (born 1940) gained his initial fame at the age of 24 with *Before the Revolution* (*Prima della rivoluzione*, 1964), a unique mix of radical politics and pure emotion which aroused a great deal of controversy in its day. He continued to craft political films through the 1960s with *The Spider's Stratagem* (*Strategia del Ragno*, 1970) and *The Conformist* (*Il Conformista*, 1970), both filled with camera movements which are among the most elaborate and most beautiful in the history of recent cinema. His mentor was Sergio Leone and Leone



11.19 Shots from the final scene of *L'Avventura* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960).

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had him write the script for a Hollywood-Italian co-production, *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Paramount, 1968).

But the general movie audience will probably associate Bertolucci with *Last Tango in Paris* (*Ultimo tango a Parigi*, 1972) which became a cause célèbre because of the brutal and explicit sexual intimacy it presented. In 1976 Bertolucci directed *1900* (*Novecento*) a film on the upcoming fascism and communism in Italy. Two boys, born in different social classes, grow up together. One is the son of a farmer, the other is the son of the landlord. The personal history of these two main characters is intertwined with the political and social history of Italy. Other Bertolucci films are *The Last Emperor* (1987), *The Sheltering Sky* (1990), *Little Buddha* (1993), and more recently *The Dreamers* (2003). All are international co-productions.

AFTER THE ART-CINEMA EPOCH

The end of the French New Wave signaled the end of art cinema as a distinct epoch. The star directors of art cinema continued to make films, but, more often than not, with less originality. They often worked in Hollywood or certainly as part of the mainstream cinema.

Soon Hollywood itself embraced many of the traits which made the art cinema of the late 1950s and early 1960s so distinctive: location shooting, non-continuous stories, naturalistic acting, and experimental cinematography and editing in such films as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *M*A*S*H*. Once again, art cinema, like movements before, has become part of the mainstream.

Eventually the power of this alternative cinema would influence the “New Hollywood” of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Everything from freeze frames and slow motion to creating intentional gaps in seemingly traditional narratives was exploited by filmmakers from Dennis Hopper in the low-budget youth cult film *Easy Rider* (1968) to Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Rain People* (1969) to Mike Nichols’ *Catch-22* (1973) to Robert Altman’s *Images* (1972). Like its European forebears, the New Hollywood began to play with conventions of Hollywood’s past through parody. For example, Woody Allen’s *Play It Again Sam* (1972) depended on everyone in the audience having seen and memorized the cult classic *Casablanca* (1943). Art-cinema devices were even applied to classic genres. The westerns of Arthur Penn, *Little Big Man* (1970) and Robert Altman, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) are good examples. Eventually even Truffaut and Antonioni, valued members of the art-cinema filmmaking community, went to work in Hollywood.



11.20 Shots from *1900* or *Novecento* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1976). World War II is over. Women hunting the fascist Attila.

European-based art cinema did not provide the only alternatives to Hollywood during the television era of 1950 through 1975. Through the 1960s filmmakers throughout the world aspired to the fame and prestige of the New Wave, to become the next Wenders, Fellini, Bresson, or Bergman. But though always hampered by less secure industrial bases from which to begin, filmmakers from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, South and Central, did on more than one occasion demonstrate that not all the interesting and significant cinema was being made in Hollywood and Western Europe. Although more sporadically, they were able to create fascinating cinematic alternatives. These new stylists of the television era are the subject of the following chapter.



11.21 *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967).

CASE STUDY 11 ART-MOVIE THEATERS IN THE USA

Starting in the 1950s, struggling movie theaters began to show non-Hollywood movies. In economic history terms, they sought to differentiate their showings to make greater profits. College-educated audiences interested in the arts embraced foreign movies that seemed so different from what Hollywood was offering.

Through the 1960s, audiences packed so-called “art-movie theaters” to see the latest movies of their favorite auteurs – from Ingmar Bergman to Jean-Luc Godard. These celebrated auteurs made personal movies that seemed to ponder ideas rather than tell entertaining stories.

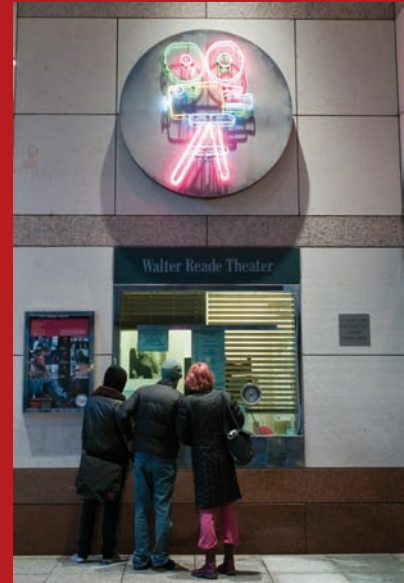
There had been a select US audience for movies from abroad starting in the 1920s – with the works of Sergei Eisenstein, Luis Buñuel, and Jean Cocteau. Many future famous directors were among their fans. For example, a young Alfred Hitchcock praised Sergei Eisenstein’s artistic achievements, and openly lauded Italian Neo-realist movies such as *Rome, Open City* (1945) and *Paisan* (1946) as serious cinema.

Satyajit Ray, the influential movie maker based in India, became famous in the USA for his “realistic” *Apu Trilogy* (1955–1959). Ray’s movies became staples at art-house theaters found in major cities in the USA. The term “art movie” became much more widely used in the USA than in Europe. During the 1960s the “art movie” also became a euphemism for racy Italian and French small-budget movies that defied the Hollywood Production Code standards for sexual explicitness.

Don Rugoff, owner of a number of important New York art-movie theaters, began booking art films in the 1960s. In 1963, with backing of a syndicate headed by Broadway musicals composer Richard Rodgers (of **Rodgers and Hammerstein**), Rugoff created a company formally called Cinema 5, to distribute only movies considered art works such as Shirley Clarke’s *The Cool World* (1963), Joseph Losey’s *Accident*, (1967), and Miloš Forman’s *The Fireman’s Ball* (*Horí, má panenka*, 1967).

The peak of the art-movie interest in the USA came sometime in the early 1970s. The downturn of the art-movie theatrical exhibition came when the Walter Reade chain, one of the pioneers of the art-movie movement, went bankrupt in 1977. It was just impossible for the Walter Reade chain to compete against showing Hollywood blockbusters like *The Godfather* (Part 1, 1972; Part 2, 1974) that had been inspired by European art movies.

Once the Walter Reade chain was reorganized under the bankruptcy laws of the USA, the company transformed itself into a mainstream first-run theater chain. With this policy, the Walter Reade chain did so well that it was taken over by Hollywood’s Columbia Pictures in 1985. When in the 1980s the age of the home video began, the art-movie house theater presentation function had been taken over by museums and university cinema programs.



11.22 The Walter Reade Theater, New York.

Richard Rodgers (1902–1979) and Oscar Hammerstein (1895–1960) were renowned and often awarded US composers and songwriters who teamed up in 1943 to write the much-applauded musical Oklahoma! (1943). Many big successes followed like South Pacific (1949) and The Sound of Music (1959).

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CHAPTER 12

ALTERNATIVE FILM INDUSTRIES: THE SOVIET UNION, EASTERN EUROPE, SOUTH AMERICA, AUSTRALIA, AND JAPAN

Introduction

Defining influences: Hollywood and the Soviet Union

Eastern Europe

South America

The New Australian Cinema

Japan

Case study 12: The importance of film festivals

INTRODUCTION

The 1960s saw the rise of true internationalism in the cinema. In Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia), young filmmakers were inspired by the French New Wave to start experimenting with new film styles. The French New Wave also inspired the Cinema Novo in Brazil and the New Argentine Cinema in Argentina. In Australia more state-funding triggered the New Australian Cinema. In Japan there was a rediscovery of great Japanese film – past and present.

But the realities of politics and economics meant that not all nations were equal in their filmmaking capabilities. So, filmmakers from countries in Eastern Europe, under strict domination of the Soviet Union, had to deal with the Soviet authorities.

In South America, Australia, and Japan, filmmakers had to deal with Hollywood. The noted filmmakers in this chapter had one thing in common: they had to deal with one of the world's two superpowers: the United States or the Soviet Union.

DEFINING INFLUENCES: HOLLYWOOD AND THE SOVIET UNION

To best understand world cinema of the television era (1950–1975) one has to first examine the dynamics of global film power. After the Second World War, country after country sought to impede Hollywood; none save those under the authority of the USSR (dissolved in 1991) succeeded.

Collapse of the USSR

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was created after the fall of the Russian empire in 1917. It started out with four members in 1922 but gradually expanded to 15 members. In August 1991 the USSR collapsed as an unforeseen result of the democratic and liberal reforms President Mikhail Gorbachev had started in 1985.

The Second World War temporarily crippled Hollywood's exporting function. Europe and Asia, the best markets for the American film industry, were cut off for the duration. As the Second World War drew to a close, the major Hollywood companies formed the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA – a branch of the Motion Picture Association of America, formerly the Hays Office) to present a united front in foreign matters. The MPEA, which operated as the sole bargaining agent for members by setting prices and terms of trade, became the center of Hollywood's renewed thrust in a post-war world. Since the United States government used Hollywood films to help project America's best face around the world, the US State Department consistently supported Hollywood's continuation as the Western world's dominant film seller.

Through the MPEA, Hollywood went to any lengths necessary to open up new markets. Indeed even powerful European countries could not keep Hollywood at bay. Some in Europe had hoped that the European Economic Community (the Common Market) might have the collective strength to deal with Hollywood, but this was not the case. In all countries, native filmmakers battled stiff opposition from theater owners who embraced Hollywood films because they made more money than from booking native productions. Governmental officials often allied with theater owners because they liked the tax revenues collected from successful theaters.

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In addition, as nations set up television operations, they saw less of a need to subsidize a native film industry. But there again, they encountered Hollywood. Of the television programs exported around the world between 1960 and 1975, the bulk came from the USA, made by the Hollywood major film companies.

The USA was not the lone superpower. The Soviet Union held influence over the socialist countries of the world. Invariably, an agency of the government controlled film production, distribution, and exhibition, usually through some part of an Education or Interior ministry. In this way, the Soviet Union held sway over the film policies of Eastern bloc socialist countries, and filmmakers in Eastern Europe had no choice but to toe the line. There were periodic thaws, but to understand the workings of Eastern European cinema after the Second World War, it is necessary to first learn about the workings (and foreign policy) of the Soviet film industry.

In the early 1950s, USSR Premier Josef Stalin supported the goals of socialist realism, which reflected a national spirit and ideology proclaimed by the Communist Party. Stalin severely limited topics filmmakers could deal with. Safe subjects included World War II films in which the united Soviet people defeated the Germans, with no mention made of help from the Allies. The safe formula included anti-American plots in which the villains were US troops or spies from the CIA. Biographies of important Russians of the past, like that of the composer Petrovich Mussorgsky in *Mussorgsky (Mussorgskii)*, 1950) directed by Grigori Roshal, were approved. Stalin silenced the greats of the Soviet cinema from Sergei Eisenstein to Alexander Dovzhenko to V. I. Pudovkin who was accused of lacking commitment to the Russian heritage for his *Admiral Nakhimov* (1946), and was forced to revise the film. His final work, *The Return of Vasili Bortnikov (Vozvrashchenie Vasiliya Bortnikova)*, 1953), was heavily supervised by party functionaries.

The early 1950s saw a steady decline in the number of films released. For example, in 1952, the year before Stalin died, only five films were produced. Part of the reason for that extremely low number was that a year earlier the state authorities had issued an edict that the production of black-and-white films would be curtailed in favor of color (Agfacolor called Sovcolor in the Soviet Union). Gradually the necessary film stock was produced, and in 1953, production rose to 30 films, many of which were recordings of Moscow stage performances.

After Stalin's death in March 1953, the dictatorial grip loosened which enabled the film industry to expand. But at first, the upheavals of change in Communist party leadership and accompanying purges caused a feeling of insecurity amongst filmmakers. Occasionally, seemingly controversial works were released, even heralded, while at other junctures less confrontational films were still suppressed. In the West this was the era of the emergence of art cinema, and two Soviet exports won considerable fame. *The Cranes Are Flying (Letyat zhuravli)*, 1957), directed by Mikhail Kalatozov, offered a haunting tale set during the Second World War. This film won the Golden Palm Award at Cannes in 1958. A tale of suffering during the Second World War (an acceptable subject in Soviet cinema) the heroine's tragedy symbolized the collective tragedy of the Soviet nation. More famous in the West was *Ballad of a Soldier (Ballada o soldate)*, 1958), a tale of a six-day leave. The rewarded soldier falls in love, returns to the front line to fight again, and is killed. Grigori Chukhrai's poignant film won the Best Film Prize at the 1959 San Francisco Film Festival. Both *The Cranes Are Flying* and *Ballad of a Soldier* exemplified the capability of the Soviet cinema.

The Soviet cinema opened up further during the 1960s, but the Soviet authorities continued to encourage safe genres through State financing. Soviet authorities permitted even satires so long as they were carefully orchestrated by the party. It was acceptable to make fun of officials from the Stalin era, but not all of them. Film director Eldar Ryazanov was very successful in making light satirical comedies that were accepted



12.1 Series of shots of the dying soldier who remembers his girlfriend. *The Cranes Are Flying* or *Letyat zhuravli* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957).

by the Soviet authorities. For example, his *Carnival Night* (*Karnaval'naya noch*, 1956), *The Girl Without an Address* (*Devushka bez adresa*, 1957), and his very successful *Mind That Car!* (*Beregis' avtomobilya*, 1961) did not cause a problem.

More typical were epics based on Soviet literature including works of Tolstoy, Gorki, Gogol, and Chekhov. The most lavish of these types of productions came with *War and Peace* (*Voyna i mir*, 1964), based on the Leo Tolstoy novel. Directed by Sergei Bondarchuk, it was made in four parts and ran for eight hours. It took five years and an estimated equivalent of \$40 million to be filmed in 70mm. Shakespearean plays, including *Othello* (*Otello*, Sergei Yutkevich, 1955), and *Hamlet* (*Gamlet*, Grigori Kozintsev, 1964), also made their way to the Soviet screens, as well as numerous operas and ballets including *Boris Godunov* (*Vera Stroyeva*, 1954), *Romeo and Juliet* (*Romeo i Dzhulyetta*, Lev Arnshtam and Leonid Lavrovski, 1955), *Swan Lake*

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(*Lebedinoe ozero*, Z. Tulubyeva, 1957), and *Sleeping Beauty* (*Spyashchaya krasavitsa*, Apollinari Dudko and Konstantin Sergeyev, 1964). These latter epics were usually financed for creation in wide-screen formats in color, to showcase the performances of the **Bolshoi** and **Kirov** theater troupes.

After the departure of USSR premier **Nikita Khrushchev** in 1964, new leader **Leonid Brezhnev** ushered in a period of stability which would last until the early 1980s. Détente increased cultural communication, but still the USSR state authorities held a firm grip over filmmaking. From 1963 on, the Soviet cinema industry was controlled by the Cinematography Committee of the Soviet Council of Ministers and fully nationalized in the 1970s. That particular committee controlled all of the country's 39 film studios, the largest four being Mosfilm, the Gorki (also in Moscow), Lenfilm (in Leningrad), and the Dovzhenko studio (in Kiev). In a typical year in the early 1970s, more than 100 feature films were produced plus hundreds of documentaries, news films, and films for television. Of the feature films a small number (less than five in each case) were co-productions with nations under Soviet control – Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, East Germany, and Bulgaria.

In the Soviet Union the number of theaters remained constant. The state managed both theatrical filmmaking and presentation as well as the production, distribution, and presentation of television programs. Under this system, theatrical filmmaking held a central place in the USSR long after television had seized the day in the West.

Andrei Tarkovsky started his directing career and gained worldwide fame during this period of stability. His talent was soon discovered abroad. His first feature *Ivan's Childhood* (*Ivano Detstvo*, 1962) won the Golden Lion in Venice. This foreign recognition helped him in his never ending quarrels with the bureaucrats in his own country. For many, Tarkovsky's films were difficult to grasp because they required a broad knowledge of religious symbols and philosophy. For example, the opening shot in his last film *The Sacrifice* (*Offret*, 1986) is so full of symbolism that without this appropriate background knowledge, it is impossible to understand in a single viewing.

While the credits are running, the camera moves very slowly upwards and shows a painting of the Italian renaissance painter Leonardo da Vinci titled "Adorazione dei Magi" ("The Adoration of the Magi," 1481–1482). Maria holds baby Jesus on her arm while the Magi offer him their gifts. Bach's song "Erbarme dich" (Have Pity) accompanies the images. This opening shot, that can be easily overlooked as "just part of the credits", points to an important Christian symbol: Jesus as the savior of the world. The main character will make a similar sacrifice. To save the world from an annihilating atomic war, he will renounce what

The Bolshoi and Kirov are the oldest and principal Russian ballet troupes known for the high technical standard of their performances. Both were founded as ballet academies in the eighteenth century; the Bolshoi in Moscow and the Kirov in St. Petersburg.

Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) was Premier of the former Soviet Union from 1958 until 1964 when he was forced to resign after a coup.

Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982) was Premier of the former Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982.



12.2 Credits and opening shots from *The Sacrifice* or *Offret* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1986).

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he loves most in the world, his wife and son. Like all his films, the pace is slow; Tarkovsky believed the natural shot length was 150 seconds, leaving the viewer room to ponder on what he or she is looking at.

Because of his constant struggle with the censors, Tarkovsky only made eight films including *Andrey Rublyov* (*Andrei Roeblov*, 1966), *Solaris* (1972), and *The Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1974). He ended his career in voluntary exile in Paris where he died of cancer in 1986.

EASTERN EUROPE

Filmmakers in Poland, Hungary, (former) Czechoslovakia, and (former) Yugoslavia (the last two countries were split apart in the late 1990s; however, we use the names they were known by in the period under discussion) were remarkably able to work in a world dominated by Hollywood to the west and the Soviet Union to the east. Struggling with state-run bureaucracies, creative movie makers still managed to fashion complex, fascinating feature-length films. But it must be emphasized that these were brief breaks in history and, in the end, the power of the Soviet Union and Hollywood reasserted the status quo. After bursts of creativity, the film industries in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia returned to routine efforts of state-sponsored and approved films fitting the socialist realist formula.

Poland

With the utter destruction of the nation, the Polish movie industry had to make a completely new start at the end of the Second World War. During the Second World War, Poland's limited production facilities were destroyed as were many of the nation's movie houses. After the Second World War, production resumed slowly; for example, only seven features were made and released in 1950. But the Polish government sponsored rebuilding, so that by the mid-1950s, a system of decentralized production studios had been established. The Polish central government remained the exclusive producer-distributor-exhibitor. By the late 1950s, Polish filmmakers had more creative freedom than existed elsewhere in Eastern Europe. In fact, the films made during this era were rarely shown in other Soviet satellites because authorities considered them in violation of the conservative, state serving, optimistic tenets of accepted socialist realism. The reputation of Poland's film industry rested with a handful of directors working during this historical break.

Andrzej Wajda emerged in the mid-1950s with a trilogy of films exploring the shape of post-war Poland. Wajda created the first breakthrough work – *A Generation* (*Pokolenie*, 1954). This powerful portrait of World War II resistance fighters emphasized sacrifice for one's country, not correctness of political views. Wajda's *Canal* (*Kanał*, 1957) followed with a story of the 1944 Warsaw uprising against the Germans. Wajda walked the fine line between the anti-Nazi feeling of his nation's cinema-goers and stories that were deemed acceptable by authorities in the USSR.



12.3 Ewa Krzyżewska in *Ashes and Diamonds* or *Popiół i Diament* (Andrzej Wajda, 1958).

Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* (*Popiół i Diament*, 1958) is considered his masterwork because it is filled with both realistic touches and overt symbols. *Ashes and Diamonds* became a particular favorite on the art-cinema circuit of the 1950s for it tells a relatively straightforward story, but does not look like a typical Hollywood film because of its vivid realism and lack of Hollywood continuity. With *Ashes and Diamonds* Wajda took a strong stance against what was then the accepted Communist Party line. He took his story from a novel that commented on the Polish Communist politics of the period and turned it on its head. The film's theme stressed that blind allegiance to the state only served to divide the Polish people.

With these three films Wajda announced the beginning of a new Polish cinema, one which broke decisively with the traditions of prewar and Stalinist filmmaking. Wajda set the tone of the 1950s with films which, instead of struggling to build socialism in conservative Soviet fashion, analyzed struggles for national independence or honor. Nationalism was stressed; the issue of Communism was simply avoided. In retrospect, it seems that Polish film artists rejected the claims of a Communist state more thoroughly and completely than others in the Eastern bloc. Polish film became an expression of Poland rather than Polish socialism, which explained the almost continuous tension between the filmmaking community and the state authorities. The apparent relaxation of government control through the early 1960s was followed by the tightening of control in 1968 after the Soviet invasion. Wajda survived the downfall of the former Soviet Union and in 2000 he was rewarded with an honorary Oscar for his entire oeuvre. By 2000 the independent cinema of the 1990s in the USA (see Chapter 14) had adapted many of the stylistic touches of Wajda's films of the 1950s.

Andrzej Munk rivaled Wajda's fame during the late 1950s. His second feature, *Man on the Track* (*Człowiek na Torze*, 1957), dealt with the consequences of a world in which political shifts were constantly intruding into everyday life. When an elderly railroad engineer is killed in an accident, his heroism is ignored during the investigation because the authorities are more concerned with his political allegiance. Munk's masterwork, *The Passenger* (*Pasażerka*, 1963), was never finished as the director died in 1961. (The film was "completed" in 1963 by using still photographs.) *The Passenger* is about a Polish woman in a German concentration camp, told from the point of view of one of the camp's guards. Again we learn of heroes surviving a rigid uncaring system, not committed to the official goals of the Communist Party.

Jerzy Skolimowski dealt with the frustrations of coming of age in a rigid socialist environment in *Identification Marks – None* (*Rysopis*, 1964), for which he earned his degree from the official state film school. He had started as a scriptwriter for Wajda on *Innocent Sorcerers* (*Niewinni Czarodzieje*) in 1959. Together with Roman Polanski, he represented one of the more remarkable of the Polish filmmakers of the 1960s. His student films, *Identification Marks – None* (1964) and *Walkover* (*Walkover*, 1965), concentrated on a limited number of shots, hundreds less than the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style would have called for. But his potential would be developed elsewhere. Skolimowski left for the West in the late 1960s and made films in several European countries like Belgium, France, and Great Britain before he journeyed to Hollywood at the end of the 1990s. His most successful film after he left Poland was *Moonlighting* (1982), produced in the UK and shot in London. The film is about four Poles who get stuck in London while renovating a house for a fellow Pole when martial law is announced in Poland.

Roman Polanski is probably the most famous Polish director of the 1960s and 1970s – first because of his early Polish films and later because of his successes in Hollywood. He started making short films in 1957, but with *Knife in the Water* (*Nóż w Wodzie*, 1962) he achieved worldwide attention. However, he was denounced by the Polish Communist Party which cut off his funding. As a student filmmaker, he had learned to make films with precious few resources – with few actors and only a hand-held camera. His new fame

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meant that producers in France, Italy, and Great Britain sought his services. They considered his films an art-cinema alternative to Hollywood and he delivered his bleak psychological portraits in *Repulsion* (1965), *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), and *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967), created for companies in Great Britain.

In 1968, Polanski went to Hollywood and directed the horror-thriller *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) for Paramount. *Rosemary's Baby* became a box-office success but his most popular film was a mystery that dealt with government corruption, *Chinatown* (1974). In response to allegations of sexual misconduct, in 1978 he fled to Europe to evade US legal authorities. This case was again raked up in 2009. Polanski, however, continued making films. His French-British coproduction *Tess* (1979) won three Oscars and in 2003 he received the Academy Award for Best Director for *The Pianist* (2002). At the age of 76 he finished *The Ghostwriter* (2010).

With Polanski's departure, the Golden Age of film in Poland was over by the late 1960s. In the 1970s the state authority, Film Polski, under the Central Film Office of the Ministry of Culture and the Arts, firmly controlled production, distribution and exhibition of all films. Television became increasingly important. In 1972, feature filmmaking accounted for 25 titles while films for television totaled more than four times that number. With only 1,500 operating theaters (for a nation of some 30 million), attendance had fallen significantly. Increasingly, Poland turned to films from the USSR and even Hollywood to fill remaining screen time.



12.4 *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974).

Czechoslovakia

The modern era of filmmaking began in 1945. The Communist Czechoslovakian government enforced the nationalization of the cinema, making it the first Eastern European industry taken under direct governmental control. Starting in 1948, the film industry languished as the nation rebuilt itself after the war. The Communist Party state bureaucrats at the Barrandov studios received *carte blanche* to educate Czechs in the service of the Communist Party. The method they employed was socialist realism, which would remain the dictated film style until 1957.

In 1962, the Czechoslovakian government initiated an experiment with "Market socialism." The Czechoslovakian central government started the National Film Academy. Unlike the rest of the population (except the Communist Party elite who had private cinemas where they watched Hollywood westerns and musicals), National Film Academy students spent their time watching classics of European and Hollywood studios: the work of Orson Welles, the Neo-realists, and the French New Wave. In these films they found the models for the New Czech Cinema. From 1963 through 1967 the Czechoslovakian New Wave ensued as a gradual change took place: filmmakers were seeking new cinematic styles, new ways of telling stories.

Although the Czech New Wave is usually dated from the release of Vojtěch Jasný's *September Nights* (*Záříové noci*) in 1957, the great divide came in 1963 with the release of Jaromil Jireš' *The Cry* (*Křik*, 1963), Věra Chytilová's *Something Different*, (*O něčem jiném*, 1963), and Miloš Forman's *Black Peter* (*Černý Petr*, 1963), all of which offered complex alternatives to socialist realism. Contemporary Czech life was given a chance to become subject matter for the first time since before the Second World War. Except for Jireš, none of these directors were party members. In the years immediately following 1963, directors Jan Němec, Evald

Schorm, Ivan Passer, Jiří Menzel, Pavel Juráček, and Ester Krumbachová helped to create an alternative cinema. These filmmakers defined the Czech New Wave, even though their differences as filmmakers made this “Wave” less a stylistic and formalistic movement as compared to the homogeneous traits of the early French New Wave.

Miloš Forman became the most famous of the Czech New Wave directors. Picking contemporary subjects, and focusing his work on working-class people, he seemed to be less interested in Communist Party affairs than in the unchanging problems of the human race. The heroes of *Talent Competition* (*Konkurs*, 1964) dream of pop stardom; the plain factory girl in *Loves of a Blonde* (*Lásky jedné plavovlásky*, 1965) struggles with her love affairs; the uncouth working-class characters of *The Firemen's Ball* (*Hoří, má panenko*, 1967) try to have fun in a dull, lifeless world. Together these films reflected the contemporary Czech working classes from a position of realistic empathy. These titles were attacked by the state, but not suppressed.



12.5 *Talent Competition or Konkurs* (Miloš Forman, 1964).

Forman shot on the streets; his style is characterized by his sensitive use of non-actors and professionals, speaking natural-sounding dialogue. *Loves of a Blonde* and *Firemen's Ball* work as humorous stories of mild social criticism. After the Soviet invasion in 1968, *Firemen's Ball* was banned, and Forman decided to move permanently to Hollywood. There Forman made *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), the most honored Hollywood film in its year of release. In 1984 he received an Oscar (Best Director) for his film *Amadeus* (1984). Forman settled in New York City and in 1975 became co-chair of the film school at Columbia University.

Věra Chytilová, more eclectic and formalist than Forman, became noted as something of a stylistic virtuoso. She gained prominence with her second feature, *Daisies* (*Sedmikrásky*, 1966). Stylistically *Daisies* emerged from a collage of influences from the Lumière brothers to Abel Gance to Charlie Chaplin. It offers a dazzling display of montage, tinting, and manipulation of colors. Chytilová used this film as a veritable tableau of experimentation. Against the complex form and style, the film evokes the youthful ennui of two girls who revolt against their drab surroundings. Its themes were so powerfully felt that complaints reached the Czech parliament; the film's ban dutifully followed. But unlike her compatriots Roman Polanski and Miloš Forman, Chytilová remained in Czechoslovakia and struggled to remain in favor and make films.



12.6 Shots from *Daisies* or *Sedmikrásky* (Věra Chytilová, 1966).

Jiří Menzel made the most famous film of this era, at least in Western Europe and the United States: *Closely Observed Trains* (*Ostře sledované vlaky*, 1966), a tale of a young railway apprentice's sexual struggles which won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1968, but was banned in Czechoslovakia after the

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Soviet invasion of 1968. Menzel's all-pervading theme, the vicissitudes of sex, can be seen in his *Capricious Summer* (*Rozmarné léto*, 1967) and his *Crime at the Night Club* (*Zločin v šantánu*, 1968). His *Larks on a String* (*Skřivánci na niti*, 1969), about the sexual yearnings of a working-class boy, was banned before its release. Menzel eventually saved his career by recanting and publically disassociating himself from his pre-invasion films. *Larks on a String* was finally released in 1990 and won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.



The seeming contradiction of the Czech New Wave came through the experience of the film academy where colleagues could study film together and did not need to worry about being allowed to make only acceptable socialist realist films. They sought to appeal to a wider audience, not simply function as tools of the state. The state at this time, the mid-1960s, tolerated these experiments, but all freedom ended in 1968 with the **Soviet military invasion**. When, a year later, the regime of Gustav Husak established power, it proclaimed a summary ban on almost an entire year's output of the Czech cinema. Husak returned to the cinema to one function: to educate through socialist realism.

12.7 *Closely Observed Trains* or *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Jiří Menzel, 1966).

The impact on the film industry was devastating. Miloš Forman, who was abroad during the invasion, Ivan Passer, Ján Kádár, and Jan Nemec, among others, left the country never to return. As stated above, Forman would become one of the leading directors in Hollywood in the 1970s and 1980s. So did Passer who made *Born to Win* (1971 – with George Segal and Karen Black), and *Law and Disorder* (1974 – with Carol O'Connor and Ernest Borgnine). Ján Kádár, who died in 1979, achieved less success in Hollywood, but did direct *Lies My Father Told Me* (1975) and *Freedom Road* (1979).

Only Menzel and Chytilová remained and struggled against the Czech state. Menzel, after a pause of six years, made *Cutting It Short* (*Postřižiny*) in 1980 and *Snowdrop Festival* (*Slavnost sněženek*) in 1985. Věra Chytilová made *The Apple Game* (*Hra o jablko*, 1976), *Panel Story* (*Prefab story*, 1980) and *Calamity* (*Kalamita*, 1982) which combines comedy and formal experimentation. By 1968 the Czech New Wave was over, a brief glowing moment in the history of the Czech cinema.

Hungary

As one of the world's smaller nations, Hungary has had a far greater influence in filmmaking than its size would indicate. This is all the more remarkable when one also considers that Hungary's language and geographical location have long isolated it from the Western European capitals of Paris and London. For that reason, the Hungarian national cinema has been particularly unified, dominated by one or two artists. As with the other countries in Eastern Europe, Hungary's cinema industry had to begin virtually from scratch after the end of World War II. In 1953 it received a temporary revival under premier Imre Nagy. This ended in 1956 with the **invasion by the USSR**; the Hungarian film industry produced less than 100 films during the late 1950s, but some proved remarkable.

The screenplay became the intellectual peg on which authoritarian bureaucracies were able to structure their control of a film, before actual production commenced. Thus, in the late 1950s, the USSR-controlled central government assigned Hungarian filmmakers scripts approved by the state, and then required the

To safeguard its interests, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968 as a reaction to the so-called Prague Spring, when Alexander Dubček (the new leader of the Czech Communist Party) had introduced democratic reforms.

The 1956 Soviet invasion in Hungary was the repression of a large popular anti-communist revolt by Russian troops.

approved screenplays be shot as written. This system was indeed much like Hollywood, but used for a far different purpose – advancing the interests of the Communist state. Hungarian studios became film factories. Filmmakers thus began to stress the cinematography, and indeed Hungarian cinema of the 1950s and 1960s became noted for the complexity and verve of its cinematography. Beginning in the 1950s, as Hungary recovered from the effects of World War II, three major directors emerged to rank with the world's best: Zoltán Fábri, Andras Kovács and Miklós Jancsó – who put the Hungarian cinema on the world map of the art-cinemas.

Zoltán Fábri (1917–1994) came first with the mid-1950s success of *Fourteen Lives* (*Életjel*, 1954). Virtually all his films concerned a group of individuals subjected to extreme stress, whether from a natural disaster as in *Fourteen Lives* or events like the collapse of **Hungarian society in 1918** in *Balint Fabian Meets God* (*Fábián Bálint találkozása Istennel*, 1979). Fábri demonstrated that a Hungarian filmmaker could deal with important themes even though state authorities had to approve each script. Two other aesthetically innovative filmmakers also dared to become more analytical of Hungarian society and culture.

Andras Kovács started his career as a film screenwriter in 1950. Ten years later he directed his first film *Summer Rain* (*Zápor*, 1960). Kovács' work is firmly grounded in the documentary and his general theme is how history shapes the individual. His first significant film was *Difficult People* (*Nehéz emberek*, 1964). It marked a decisive turn in the Hungarian cinema since it did not tell a prescriptive state tale of the joys of Communism, but instead offered a narrative of brilliant people repressed by the state. This film marks a shift away from the confining constraints of the immediate post-war era. By relying on documentary principles, Kovács avoided the twin tyrannies of prescribed scripts and formulaic cinematographic style.

Kovács continued to deal with historical analysis in his later work. His widely acclaimed *Cold Days* (*Hideg napok*, 1966) memorializes the massacre of the villagers of Ujvidek (now Novi Sad in Serbia) during the Second World War. Films about war atrocities were hardly something new, but this particular effort focused on the collaboration of Hungarian Fascists. Kovács underscored the responsibilities of the common man in the struggle against totalitarian powers. The film supports the need for a socialist state in the face of fascism, but the film is really about authoritarian regimes and their taking of power.

Miklós Jancsó is certainly the most famous of the Hungarian filmmakers. He developed a complex visual style – with long takes and sweeping camera movements – and thus his films have little in the way of conventional acting. Music is always **diegetic**.

On 16 November
1918 Hungarian
premier
Michael Károlyi
announced
Hungary to be
an independent
Republic, thus
ending the dual
monarchy.

Diegetic sound. The source of the music (or sounds) must be specified in the film itself and is part of the fictional world created in the film, like for example dialogue. Non-diegetic music (or sounds) is the opposite of this: its source lies outside the fiction world in the film as is the case with for example a voice-over which can only be heard by the audiences.

But the most distinctive stylistic trait was the long take – often ten minutes elapse without a cut. In *Red Psalm* (*Még kér a nép*, 1972), for instance, there are some 20 shots to fill its 87 minutes. And during these long takes, the camera is constantly moving.

In films like *The Red and the White* (*Csillagosok, katonák*, 1967), *Agnus Dei* (*Égi bárány*, 1970), and *Red Psalm* (1971), Jancsó employed very lengthy camera movements that roam across and among groups of

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Craning is a camera movement in which the camera is lifted above the ground with the help of a crane.

people; tracking, **craning**, zooming, and changing focus. Jancsó's movies are as much about camerawork as they are about the past. Along with Hollywood's Orson Welles, Denmark's Carl Dreyer, and France's Jean Renoir, Jancsó stands as one of cinema's masters of the long, moving take.

But Jancsó is no minimalist filmmaker simply interested in formalist technique. His films, like those of Kovács, reveal a deep-seated interest in the problems of Marxism on an intellectual and theoretical level. In his films Jancsó is concerned with why people do what they do. People are not villains but can perform villainous acts. Another question he seeks to answer is why so many idealistic revolutions have spawned totalitarian states. *Red Psalm* thus looks at the nature of the revolutionary process. *Agnus Dei* tries to make sense of the Stalinist regime of terror in the USSR in the 1930s. *The Confrontation* (*Fényes szelek*, 1969) deals with the role of intellectuals and students in shaping a socialist society while *The Red and the White* (1967) examines the realities of Hungarians caught up in an armed struggle for socialism.

In Jancsó's films, the historical situations are stripped of all the particulars which might individualize them, and the events and individuals are not portrayed realistically. The metaphysical situations his films portray end in betrayal, slaughter, and despair. Far from giving the viewer a neat sense of closure, they portray closed circles of violence in which redemption comes, if ever, through self-sacrifice. This is a filmmaker who stands outside both the Hollywood system and the system of socialist realism.



12.8 Shots from *Red Psalm* or *Még Kér a Nép* (Miklós Jancsó, 1972). The camera follows the soldier and circles around him.

Yugoslavia

Marshall Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was the Yugoslav communist leader and dictator from 1945 until his death in 1980.

Although there existed a small Yugoslavian cinema long before 1945, the Yugoslavian film industry began anew at the close of World War II. At that time filmmakers shared the struggle against Fascism with the nation's leader **Marshall Tito** and helped form a united country composed of six republics and two autonomous provinces within Serbia, enveloping five major languages, three religions, and two alphabets. Yugoslavia's films reflect the diversity of this complex social matrix.

After the Second World War, Tito helped support the creation of 22 filmmaking companies and ordered the construction of more than a thousand movie houses. Tito initially centralized the film industry at

Koshutnyak, a huge studio complex outside Belgrade. But with slumping attendance in movie theaters, this complex was later transformed into a television production facility. According to the 1956 Film Law, each of the six republics came to have its own film center, enveloping the numerous existing companies.

This plan seemed appropriate for a country that was neither a planned socialist state like the USSR nor a market capitalist nation like Great Britain. Yugoslavia's mixed economy was reflected in the film industry; films were financed through a complicated mosaic of grants from the cultural committees of each republic and funds generated at the box-office. By the 1960s, this mixture of capitalism and socialism resulted in two types of films: films for the small home market, typically social comedies or celebrations of the victories of the partisans in World War II, and those for export, a handful of films aimed at the art-cinema market. The latter tend to be more individualistic, less about Yugoslavia in particular, and more about the joys and frustrations of social and personal relations.

Yugoslavia also became known for its work in animation. Influenced by Walt Disney as well as the more experimental efforts of Czech and Pole cartoonists, the Yugoslavs, lacking needed funds for Disney-like animation, developed a method of reduced animation. By this system fewer drawings were used to effect a less full, realistic look. Reduced animation was faster, cheaper, and more flexible.

Dusan Vukotic (1927–1998) had much to do with establishing the Czech reduced animation style through his experiments with simple line drawings and semi-abstract comic characters. Thematically he dealt with the influence of Western goods and modern civilization coming to Yugoslavia. Consider *Surogat* (1961) in which a line figure of a man can create any object he desires, from air mattresses to fish, even humans. When the woman he has created runs off, to vent his wrath the hero begins to “unplug” the world, including the film we are watching. This is a satiric film with a complex jazz accompaniment. It delighted many critics with its self-reflexive jokes on the process of animation itself. But such shorts did not make an industry; that came from feature-length films.

Movie production in Yugoslavia followed three phases of development. From the close of the war through the 1950s, an industry had to be established and, like fellow Eastern European filmmakers, Yugoslavs concentrated their meager resources on anti-Nazi cinema. For example, the first feature made after the war, Vjekoslav Afrić's *Slavica* (1947), took its story from the partisan defense of the country against the Germans and Italians. The partisan defense soon became a popular subject and many more films were produced in that same genre until 1980. It was a native formulaic genre in which the evil German and Italian Fascists were ultimately overwhelmed by the good Yugoslav nationalists.

There were some complex treatments of the war. For example, France Štiglic created *The Valley of Peace* (*Dolina miru*, 1956), lyrically playing off the war experience as seen through the eyes of two children who rescue a crashed American pilot. Štiglic's *The Ninth Circle* (*Deveti krug*, 1960) told of a Zagreb Jewish woman who falls in love but then is taken away to a concentration camp. This was the first Yugoslavian film to directly treat the concentration camp issue and the atrocities committed by the Ustashis, the Croatian collaborators who murdered millions of Jews and Serbs during the Second World War.

The New Wave of Yugoslav cinema in the 1960s is often called the “Black Wave” – because the darker side of the socialist society was shown. A number of directors emerged, primarily trained as documentary filmmakers. They created individualistic works which made their mark around the work in art cinemas in the West. It was no accident that this Black Wave coincided with a liberalism in Yugoslav society in general and was coupled, as with many countries around the world, with a degree of social unrest and the rise of youth culture in the 1960s.

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Although the Black Wave of Yugoslavia was heralded in 1957 with the release of *Saturday Night (Subotom uvece)*, 1957) directed by Vladimir Pogacic, it was 1961 which inaugurated a new era in both quantity (32 features in one year) and quality (numerous awards won). Once the new decentralized constitution was put into place in 1963, a new spirit of Yugoslav feature filmmaking commenced, centered on the works of Alexander Petrović, Zivojin Pavlović, and Dušan Makavejev.

Alexander Petrović received international recognition with his third feature, *Three (Tri)*, 1965). This triptych – a genre very common at the time – presented three encounters with death during the Second World War each starring Bata Zivojinovic, then the leading actor in Yugoslavia. In the first, he observes the execution of an innocent man; in the second he himself is the victim of a tense chase by the Nazis, who kill another partisan instead; and finally he plays a partisan officer who must sentence to death a young woman to whom he is quite attracted. This is a tightly drawn set of narratives which won First Prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (located in Yugoslavia) and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film of the year.

Even better known outside Yugoslavia is his next film, *I Even Met Happy Gypsies (Skupljači perja)*, 1967), which was also nominated for a Foreign Film Oscar and won the International Critics Ward at the Cannes Film Festival. Shot in rich colors by Tomislav Pinter, a leading Yugoslav cinematographer, this is a realistic story of the lives of gypsies in modern-day Serbia. It was voted by Yugoslav critics in 1983 as the best Yugoslav film ever made.

Zivojin Pavlović (1933–1999) was a Serb who made more than a dozen films. Some critics regard two of his films the most interesting Yugoslav films of the 1960s because of their **existentialism**: *Awakening of the Rats (Budjenje pacova)*, 1967) and *When I am Dead and White (Kad budem mrtav i beo)*, 1967). His partisan genre drama *The Ambush (Zaseda)*, 1969) follows the growing disillusionment of a young partisan with the new socialist state immediately after the war. Stalin is the villain here. Pavlović opens and closes the film with stark images of Stalin coupled with Russian marches on the sound track and unmercifully takes apart the shortcomings of overzealous Communist authorities who committed crimes in the name of state solidarity. His films proved to be too offensive to the Yugoslav authorities in power even in the liberal days of the late 1960s, and he was hindered the rest of his career.

Dušan Makavejev challenged the Classical Hollywood film style and form. For example his *Innocence Unprotected (Nevinost bez zaštite)*, 1968) is a fragmented, chaotic, interrupted film. In the Classical Hollywood cinema, all the loose ends should be tied up but this film celebrates its lack of closure. *Innocence Unprotected* is a collage, an experiment in an alternative way to make films. He used a wide range of possible filmic materials. One of them came from the 1942 “original” film *Innocence Unprotected* made by Aleksic, a Yugoslav acrobat. A second source of filmic material was a mass of newsreels from the 1940s, but also posters and newspaper clippings from the period. This film challenges us to examine our concept of what is film. Makavejev directly asks cinemagoers to consider what we know about the past.

Using forms of collage and compilation techniques, Makavejev juxtaposed images out of order and constantly played with disjointed time. He structured his films to interweave personal and sexual relationships with continuing struggles within the economic and political spheres. His most acclaimed work was *W.R. Mysteries of the Organism (W.R. – Misterije organizma)*, 1971) (W.R. standing for philosopher William Reich). Released as the era of liberalism in filmmaking was coming to a close in Yugoslavia, this film synthesized the various experimental techniques he had dabbled with during the 1960s. This almost surreal flow of images juxtaposed everything from sex and politics to Freud and Marx to film and “reality.” It is humorous, liberating, and ironic. As with *Innocence Unprotected* it challenges the viewer to think, to ponder.

Existentialism is a philosophical theory centered on the individual and its relation to its environment, stressing the individual as a free agent.

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It criticizes both Stalin and Western capitalism. This film also challenges the established codes of Hollywood to look at fundamental relationships and may be one of the most celebrated of the films of Yugoslavia from the 1960s. But his career dwindled as he directed only eight more films in the next 40 years.



12.9 Juxtaposing images in *W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism* or *W.R. – Misterije organizma* (Dušan Makavejev, 1971).

SOUTH AMERICA

Eastern Europe had to deal with the dominant nation state the USSR. The large nations of South America, Brazil and Argentina, had to deal with Hollywood. Both were rich enough to sustain a small native industry, but Hollywood captured the bulk of cinema-going. Indeed, smaller South American countries, notably Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, had no regular film production at all. Occasionally, governments would sponsor educational or documentary films, but in the few hundred commercial cinemas in each country, the bulk of the films shown were from Hollywood.

The film industry in Brazil before the 1960s was so ineffective that Hollywood exported extensively to this nation of 70 million people. An indigenous industry concentrated on one genre, the *chanchada*, or musical comedy. In the late 1940s, Luiz Carlos Barretto and noted documentary filmmaker Alberto Calvacanti opened the Vera Cruz studio where they produced more than a dozen features before they went out of business. In this and other instances, Brazil proved that no nation could out-Hollywood Hollywood.

That changed in the 1960s with the Cinema Novo (New Cinema). Inspired by the French New Wave and Italian Neo-realism, Cinema Novo put Brazil on the international cinema map. Cinema Novo came at a time of economic boom and increasing national pride. In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, filmmakers attempted to plug into the art-cinema interest. Through cine-clubs and discussion the Brazilians attempted to construct their own unique contribution to the new wave of cinema.

The Cinema Novo movement came in three waves. During the first period (from 1960 to 1964) filmmakers drew on a history of the revolt of the underclasses and folklore of the poor. Glauber Rocha's *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*, 1964) critiqued the banditry and chaos of northeast Brazil; Ruy Guerra's *The Guns* (*Os fuzis*, 1964) probed conflicts among peasants, landowners, and the military; Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Barren Lives* (*Vidas secas*, 1963) looked at peasant poverty in the northeastern section of the nation. These and other works sought to be more than film entertainment or an alternative to Hollywood. These socially committed filmmakers wanted to spur downtrodden masses to action, to articulate their outrage. Such revolutionary aspirations were never fulfilled partly because these films were never widely distributed and thus often never reached their intended audiences.

From 1964 to 1968, Cinema Novo suffered because the military had seized power from a populist government. Filmmakers re-grouped and tried to figure a next step. Glauber Rocha made *Land in Anguish* (*Terra en transe*, 1967) telling of a self-styled revolutionary shot down by the police. Between 1968 and

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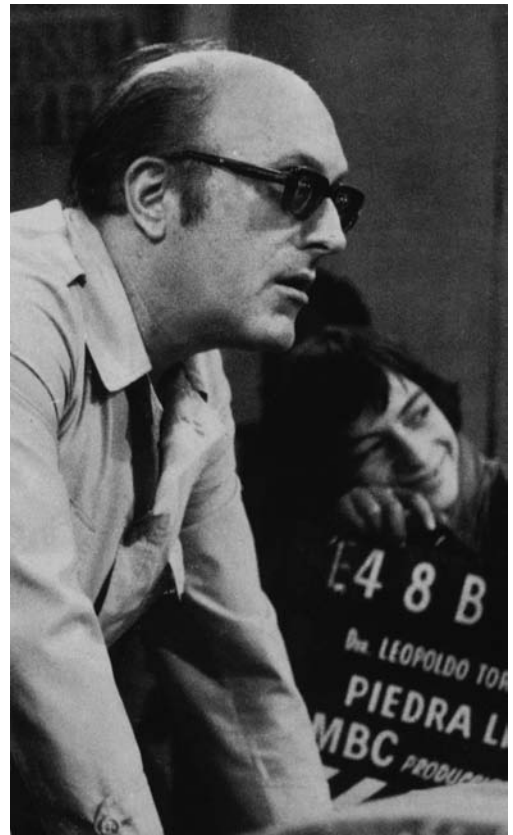
1972, filmmaking prospects grew bleak. Another right-wing government took power and began to censor movies and arrest filmmakers. Glauber Rocha, Ruy Guerra, and Carlos Diegues took refuge in exile. Those who remained avoided political subjects. Indeed Rocha's *Antonio das Mortes* (*O dragão da maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro*, 1969) signaled the end of the Cinema Novo. This lyrical mythic epic creatively integrated elements of Brazilian popular religious culture, politics, folklore, social history, music, and literature.

Filmmakers in this period pushed for nationalist support of the movies. The government created Embrafilin in 1969 to finance films and run theaters. It dictated that any theater must show a Brazilian film 140 days of a year, and set maximum amounts of currency earned with film distribution that Hollywood companies could take out of the country. But it was not until a political thaw during the mid-1970s that this law could be put to any significant use to revitalize filmmaking in Brazil, initiating a third phase.

In contrast, Argentina had only one quarter the population of Brazil. Nevertheless, its theatrical film production remained about half the size again of Brazil's. The nation had theaters in all the big cities, including seven American-style drive-ins located on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. A handful of directors were able to survive in this small market (relative to Hollywood), including one who would make an international reputation during the art-cinema era.

Leopoldo Torre Nilsson (1924–1978) was one director who was able to survive in the small world of Argentine cinema and achieve a fair degree of fame in the wider art-cinema world of the early 1960s. Torre Nilsson came from a movie family; in fact, he co-directed his first feature, *Oribe's Crime* (*El crimen de Oribe*, 1950), with his father. He did not make many films (21 in all), but some were quite distinguished. The first Jorge Luis Borges story was brought to the screen as *Days of Hate* (*Días de odio*, 1954). For *The House of the Angel* (*La casa del ángel*, 1957) he first teamed with his novelist wife, Beatriz Guido. She wrote the scripts; he directed. He took *The House of the Angel* to the Cannes Film Festival and it was hailed by such French luminaries as André Bazin and Eric Rohmer. He won a prize at Cannes in 1961 for his *The Hand in the Trap* (*La mano en el trampa*, 1961), another tale of loneliness and woe.

The House of the Angel proved the turning point in his career. He broke with the routine comedies and melodramas produced to compete with Hollywood imports and made a film which was approved of abroad and easily fit into the art-cinema category. Many compared the intensity of the film with the best of Ingmar Bergman and Luis Buñuel. Torre Nilsson's themes and stories of the isolated Europeanized bourgeoisie stifled by a repressive Catholic moral force in Argentina were well accepted by European audiences and, to a lesser extent, by American film-goers.



12.10 Leopoldo Torre Nilsson.

ALTERNATIVE FILM INDUSTRIES: THE SOVIET UNION, EASTERN EUROPE, SOUTH AMERICA, AUSTRALIA, AND JAPAN

Inspired by the success of Torre Nilsson and the French New Wave, a generation of 1960s directors appeared in Argentina, often referred to as the New Argentine cinema. Noted directors included David Kohon, Rodolfo Kuhn, José Martínez Suárez, Lautaro Murúa, Simón Feldman, and Manuel Antin. The Argentine New Wave lasted only two years (1960 to 1962), until the government changed hands and began to clamp down on its critics. Suárez's *El Crack* (1960) exposed the corrupt world of professional soccer; Kuhn's *Little Bird Gomez* (*Pajarito Gómez*, 1964) exposed the seedy side of the entertainment industry. These New Wave directors were linked by a sense of disenchantment with the status quo in Argentine society.

The most famous of the Argentine New Wave films inspired worldwide attention. Octavio Getino and Fernando E. Solanas made *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La hora de los hornos*, 1968). The film was banned for years, yet this three-part, four-hour-long documentary skillfully combined newsreel footage, dramatic sequences, and printed slogans in a cinematic collage to win awards in Italy, West Germany, and Great Britain. The film was not meant to entertain but to incite revolution. Building on the nationalism of the former Argentinean president **Juan Perón**, it sought a left-wing revolution to put an end to underdevelopment and exploitation. It failed in that task, and thereafter the Argentine cinema returned to sporadic production, too often aimed at besting Hollywood, an endless task.

Juan Perón (1895–1974) was Argentine president from 1946 until he was removed from power by the Argentine army in 1955. In 1972 the Peronist Party was legalized again and after its candidate Hector Cámpora resigned, Perón returned as a president until his death in 1974.

THE NEW AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

In 1986, film fans around the world embraced the “New” Australian Cinema with a Hollywood hit: *Crocodile Dundee*. The film was released in the United States by Paramount Pictures and the film made Australian Paul Hogan a major star. It finished in second place behind *Top Gun* as the top Hollywood blockbuster in 1986. But this burst of creative filmmaking from Australia had really begun ten years earlier.

From 1970 onwards, Australian cinema produced a varied body of work. There were major reinterpretations of Australian history in *Breaker Morant* (Bruce Beresford, 1980) and *My Brilliant Career* (Gillian Armstrong, 1979). *Mouth to Mouth* (John Duigan, 1978) and *Stir* (Stephen Wallace, 1980) examined the morals of contemporary Australian society. These and other films created a stir at film festivals around the world in the 1970s signaling yet another New Wave.

In 1970 the Australian Parliament established the Australian Film Development Office to allocate governmental funds to provide assistance to film (and television) producers. There was simply no way to compete with Hollywood unless the national government helped. The Australian Film Development Office lured three foreign films to be shot in Australia. British director Tony Richardson's *Ned Kelly* (1970) had rock star Mick Jagger as an Australian folk hero. Another Brit, Nicholas Roeg, drew a haunting portrait of the barren, bleak but beautiful Australian outback in *Walkabout* (1971) as he told of the clash of the white and aborigine cultures. For the third work, Canadian director Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (titled *Outback* in the United States, 1971) hired a predominantly Australian cast and crew. The film tells the story of a teacher in an outback town where violence simmered just below the surface of what appears to be beautiful and idyllic surroundings.

The Australian Development Corporation oddly did not seek a place in the art-cinema markets in the USA and Europe, but instead backed wacky comedies such as *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), followed two years later by *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own* (1974). Both offer uproarious parodies of a particular Australian character, the “Ocker,” who centers his life on sex and Foster's lager. The humor is crude, but the mise-en-scène colorful. Both films were big hits in Australia but not in film festivals in the USA or Europe. Director **Bruce Beresford** launched his career with these two hits. A native of Sydney,

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The Boer War (1899–1902) was the second freedom war of the Boers (South African farmers from Dutch origin. “Boer” is Dutch for “farmer”) against the British empire.

Beresford studied filmmaking in England but returned to his native land in 1971. His international breakthrough came just before Christmas of 1980 with the release of *Breaker Morant*, a beautifully crafted tale of three Australian soldiers sacrificed by the British government during the **Boer War** at the end of the nineteenth century. Like many a successful foreign director before him, Beresford used his success in Australia to move to Hollywood and created the hits, *Tender Mercies* (1982), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), and *Double Jeopardy* (1999), all blockbusters.

Peter Weir was the director most responsible for opening the eyes of the world to a new Australian cinema. His first notable effort was a gothic and camp horror film, *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974). The film was promoted at the Cannes Film Festival, but critics were divided. His next film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) was distributed successfully in the USA. *Gallipoli* (1981) earned Weir international fame. He went to Hollywood and made big budget films such as *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982), starring Mel Gibson, and *Witness* (1985), starring Harrison Ford. After that he directed films like *Dead Poets Society* (1989), starring Robin Williams, *Fearless* (1993), and *The Truman Show* (1998).



12.11 *The Cars That Ate Paris* (Peter Weir, 1974).

George Miller made his name with the exciting trio of *Mad Max* movies with Mel Gibson as the main character. *Mad Max* (1979) and *The Road Warrior* (1981) were both picked up by Hollywood. Like Beresford and Weir, Miller too moved to Hollywood, and directed the best segment of *Twilight Zone, The Movie* (1983) – “Nightmare at 2,000 Feet.” He also made *Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome* (1985), with Tina Turner, and *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), starring Jack Nicholson and pop singer Cher.

Miller, in his first two “Mad Max” films, created a futuristic savage world by using Australia’s desolate outback. Through creative make-up, he was able to fashion larger-than-life villains and anti-heroes and to help make Mel Gibson an international star. Miller’s mise-en-scène is extraordinary. His highways seem to stretch out for endless miles and lead nowhere. There is no shade, no relief. Dressed in a mixture of football uniforms, leather jackets, and desert wear, the villains are a hard and desperate lot of survivors who know no bounds of violence for survival in the post-cataclysmic world. To counter this evil, Max is the burnt out anti-hero but still able to add some civilization to this madness.

Gillian Armstrong was one of the first students of a film school funded by the Australian Development Corporation. She went on to become the first woman to direct a film in Australia in 45 years. She directed *My Brilliant Career* (1979) and *Starstruck* (1983). Her *My Brilliant Career* is a drama featuring a headstrong, free spirited girl growing up in late nineteenth-century Australia, who rejects a marriage proposal in order to maintain her independence so she can write a novel called “My Brilliant Career.” *Starstruck* is a delightful new-wave musical comedy.

The New Australian Cinema ended in 1980 when the best talents seemed to have moved to Hollywood. The government, however, wanted to stimulate film production and in 1980 the so-called “10BA” measure granted high tax deductions to film investors. Many criticized this measure because it would stimulate a profit driven – instead of artistic driven – film industry. Investors were only interested in their tax profits, not in the quality of the films they helped to finance. Most of the films produced this way did not receive much critical acclaim and many were not even distributed, as under this law the profits of the film did not matter.

In 1988 the Australian national government created the Film Finance Corporation Australia (FFC) to support artistic films. The FFC, however, only funded film projects that promised also to be commercially successful. This policy stimulated safe films without much experimentation, but generated some quite successful films like *Muriel’s Wedding* (Paul J. Hogan, 1994), *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1992), and *Shine* (Scott Hicks, 1996). These measures showed that the backing of a national film industry could help gain international recognition.



12.12 Shots of preparing the confrontation. Mel Gibson as Max (2). *Mad Max II: The Road Warrior* (George Miller, 1981).

JAPAN

In contrast Japan had long had an indigenous studio system. Before the Second World War, the Japanese film industry was one of the largest in the world, often out-producing Hollywood. And this was done without a major export market. The Japanese studios divided films into historical (*jidai-geki*), and contemporary (*gendai-geki*) categories. Within the historical category the most popular genre was the sword fight film (*chambara*), or what has come to be known as the samurai film. Within the contemporary category there were comedies, films about modern-day office workers, and family dramas.

After the Second World War, the American occupation forces would try to reform the Japanese empire into a parliamentary government with an infrastructure modeled after the institutions of the United States. Gradually, the Japanese began to rebuild their nation, including its film industry. Theaters and studios re-opened, but to strict censorship by the American occupation forces. For example, it was forbidden to make films in a nationalistic or anti-foreign tone, or to show an anti-democratic opinion. Amongst the favored subjects was the happy return of soldiers to civilian life and the equal treatment of all citizens of all classes.

Although Allied bombing destroyed more than half the country's movie theaters, the film studios remarkably survived virtually intact, and so production after the Second World War could begin again immediately. The problem was that necessary equipment (lights, film stock, and camera parts) were in short supply. Slowly, during the 1950s, a dominant set of companies again took charge, led by Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei. By 1955 the Japanese film industry had fully recovered. Indeed, by the mid-1950s the companies dominating Japanese cinema seemed remarkably similar to those which controlled the film business before the war.

The Golden Age of studio filmmaking might have returned save for the innovation of television. Regular television broadcasts were first made in 1953 by the publicly owned Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) and the privately-owned Nippon Television Network (NTV). Both companies expanded rapidly and soon millions of Japanese households owned a television set. Theatrical film attendance peaked in the late 1950s and then declined, falling quickly to a sixth of the peak figure by the late 1960s. The Japanese film industry had to adapt.

Yakuza comprises two different groups: the tekiya (con artists of feudal Japan) and bakuo (gamblers). After the Second World War yakuza also included gurentai (ruthless gangster).

One genre that attracted large audiences was the *Yakuza* film. The main character in the *Yakuza* films is a hero who is torn between his social obligations (*giri*) and his personal ones (*ninjo*). These social obligations can vary from a responsibility to repressed, poor people; loyalty to a boss, a gang, friends, or family. Always there is a very obvious good guy and bad guy. The good guy is often a loner and can never escape his *giri*. The climax of the narrative is a sword or gun fight in which things are resolved. In the late 1920s and 1930s the *Yakuza* films were very popular and in the 1960s there was a revival.

Once a particular *Yakuza* film turned out to be a box-office hit, more were made with the same cast and director. For example, in the 1950s one popular series of films centred on the character Jirocho (a nineteenth-century Robin Hood-like *Yakuza* boss). The first one in a row of nine was called *Adventures of Jirocho* (*Jirocho sangokushi*, 1952) – all directed by Makino Masahiro. Many spin-offs and remakes followed between 1952 and 1959. When in the early 1970s, the popularity of the *Yakuza* films declined, director Fukasaku (family name) Kinji was asked by the Toei studio to “rework” the genre. Fukasaku started focusing more on the negative aspects of *Yakuza* life and made the very successful *Battles without Honour and Humanity* (aka *Combat without a code*, *Jingi naki tatakai*, 1973–1974), a series of five films, followed by a series of three films called *New Battles Without Honour and Humanity* (*Shin jingi naki tatakai*, 1974–1976). The series was based on journal articles by a former *Yakuza*, liboshi (family name) Kochi, and

thus led to more complex *Yakuza* films. These films were not simply about the fight between good and evil, but outlined complex relations between opposing social forces. The members of the gangs are in a way victims of these social forces. Fukasaku put a great deal of extreme violence into his films but at the same time tried to create a realistic atmosphere. Fukasaku died in 2003 at the age of 72, while working on the violent *Battle Royale 2 (Batoru rowaiaru II: Chinkonk)*, the sequel of the controversial *Battle Royale (Batoru rowaiaru)*, 2000) in which students are forced to kill each other in a sadistic game.

The *Yakuza* films largely failed to reach Western audiences. Amongst the films which did become world famous were those made by three grand masters of the cinema: Akira Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Yasujiro Ozu. These three filmmakers projected themes, stories, and a visual style of a non-western, Oriental world. Smooth Hollywood-like camera movements were not always necessary. For example, a Kurosawa samurai film might find its climax recorded with an unsteady, hand-held camera. In addition, the Japanese discovered the virtues of deep space long before it became popular in 1940s Hollywood. After the Second World War, audiences at film festivals in Europe and the United States discovered and praised Ozu's alternatives. But it should be remembered that in the post-war era, these three Japanese filmmakers worked within a studio system. This was not some Asian artistic colony, but an industry trying to maximize profits just like Hollywood. All three inhabited a society and culture awash with Hollywood films: Akira Kurosawa acknowledges his debt to such directors as John Ford, Ozu loved the comedies of Charlie Chaplin, and Mizoguchi loved the films of Orson Welles.

But an historical analysis needs to understand the alternative ways Japanese directors crafted their films within their studio system. Akira Kurosawa, Yasujiro Ozu, and Kenji Mizoguchi provided some of the most complex, striking films in the history of cinema over careers that lasted decades. In their own nation they worked in an industry, but with structural and stylistic possibilities not found in Hollywood films. It was only with the rise of art-cinema appreciation in film societies, in special theaters, and in film festivals did audiences in the West discover something new and different. Not surprisingly, Japanese films were seen as art films in the west. Praised for their non-Hollywood film style, directors became celebrated auteurs in the 1950s and 1960s.

Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998) is the most famous Japanese director outside his own country. In 1951, when he won the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival for *Rashomon* (1950), Kurosawa's fame quickly spread throughout the United States and Europe. However, by the time the West learned of *Rashomon*, Kurosawa was already a well-established director in his own country. Kurosawa first started working in the movies as a *benshi* (a narrator for silent films). In 1936 he joined the Photo Chemical Laboratory Studio (later a part of Toho) as an assistant director. He became a Toho director in 1942, under the supervision of Kajiro Yamamoto, noted director of comedies and war films.

Kurosawa started making his best films in 1948 with *Drunken Angel (Yoidore tenshi)*, 1948), in which he teamed Takashi Shimura (as a blustery alcoholic doctor) and a young Toshiro Mifune (as a hot headed gangster). These two actors would portray temperamental relationships in numerous Kurosawa films during the late 1940s and early 1950s, including *Stray Dog (Nora-inu)*, 1949), *Quiet Duel (Shizukanaru ketto)*, 1949), and the classic *Seven Samurai (Shichinin no samurai)*, 1954). Indeed, Kurosawa followed the typical Japanese studio practice of employing the same cast and crew production after production, including cinematographer Asakazu Nakai and composer Fumio Hayasaka.

His own consistent drawing power at the Japanese (and later international) box-office and his long-term studio contract provided Kurosawa with economic independence matched by few directors in Japan. Audiences loved the famous final battle scenes in *Seven Samurai*. Cineastes praised his use of long lenses

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and multiple camera setups. Kurosawa added wide-screen imagery to his lexicon in 1958 with another samurai film, *The Hidden Fortress* (*Kashiki toride no san akunin*, 1958). A firm believer in trying new technologies, during the 1960s and 1970s he would experiment with color, Panavision cameras from the United States, and multi-track Dolby sound.

Since Kurosawa incorporated elements from European culture in his films, they were easier than those of many Japanese directors for Western audiences to appreciate. Frequently he used symphonic excerpts from Beethoven rather than traditional Japanese music. He drew his stories from the classics of Western literature, including Dostoyevski's *The Idiot* (1951), Gorky's *Lower Depths* (1957), Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (*Throne of Blood* in 1957), and *King Lear* (*Ran* in 1985). Indeed, he admired the films of Jean Renoir and John Ford.

Yet it was a story told from four different points of view – *Rashomon* – which made Kurosawa a renowned name. Western intellectuals embraced the multiple points of view as a stark alternative to Classical Hollywood stories. *Rashomon* caused intellectuals of the 1950s to praise cinema as an art form equal to the novel or theater. In the West *Rashomon* is praised for asking: “What is truth?” and showing that the answer has many sides. Superficially a courtroom drama, *Rashomon* presents in a most direct manner a bandit's violent attack on a traveling warrior and his wife. A wood gatherer discovers the warrior's corpse; the authorities capture the bandit and charge him as the killer. They bring the lady to police headquarters to provide testimony. The dead warrior (voiced through a medium), the bandit, the lady, and the wood gatherer present their versions of what happened. Each story differs from the others.

If *Rashomon* established Kurosawa as a master director, *Seven Samurai* proclaimed to the world his visual skills as a director of complex films. From its opening shot of silhouetted horsemen galloping across a horizontal plane, *Seven Samurai* tells us that the director of this film has seen many a John Ford western. Kurosawa organized *Seven Samurai* like a western, with the savage brigands (corresponding to the Native Americans) that harass the civilized town folk, and the samurai who live in between and help the town folk (like the “cowboy” heroes). These samurai were warriors without masters and thus looked more like free ranging cowboys than the traditional Japanese samurai allied with a royal house.

Kurosawa emphasized the unbridgeable differences between the villagers and their hired defenders. Although allied momentarily, the samurai and the townspeople actually seek far different goals. Villagers fight for home and family; samurai for honor. Thus, the samurai form their own separate professional group. Kurosawa went against the conventions of the Japanese samurai film in which the samurai themselves represent civilization. Here they stand between chaos and enlightenment, as so often seen with the western heroes from Hollywood. Stylistically Kurosawa carefully positioned his samurai figures away from the community, but also away from the forces of evil. A primary visual motif is one of boundaries, both natural



12.13 A reference in *Seven Samurai* or *Shichinin no samurai* (1) (Akira Kurosawa, 1954) to the John Ford western *Rio Grande* (2) (John Ford, 1950).

(mountains, woods, flooded rice paddies), and man-made (fences, doorways). In other words, Kurosawa made westerns for intellectuals.



12.14 Visual motives of boundaries in *Seven Samurai* or *Shichinin no samurai* (Akira Kurosawa, 1954): windows as fences (1); the vertical lines of the trees resemble fences (2); horizontal lines of the fences and vertical lines of the spears of the men (3).

Kurosawa could make more than courtroom dramas and samurai tales. *Ikiru* (1952) is probably Kurosawa's most famous *gendai-geki* (contemporary drama), popular in the West because of its serious treatment of a universal subject: an older man who gradually learns to live only as he is dying. Kurosawa still directed movies and wrote film scripts when he was in his eighties. His beautifully crafted *Dreams* (*Yume*, 1993) is considered as his most personal film as he adapted his own dreams for eight loosely connected short films. Kurosawa died in 1998, five years after his last film *Not Yet* (*Madadayo*, 1993) was released.

Kenji Mizoguchi (1898–1956) had been directing movies since the silent era. His post-World War II films were discovered in Europe and the United States by critics and scholars more closely examining the complex motion pictures coming out of Japan in the wake of *Rashomon*. His films *The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*, 1952), *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953), *Sansho the Bailiff* (*Sansho dayu*, 1954), *Crucified Lovers* (*Chikamatsu monogatari*, 1954), and *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*, 1956), Mizoguchi's last film, were all released in the West.

Mizoguchi did not begin his career after the Second World War. He directed films continuously from 1923 through 1956, the year of his death, completing 85 in total. Mizoguchi's career reached an early plateau in 1936 when he teamed up with screenwriter Yoshikata Yoda for *Osaka Elegy* (*Naniwa ereji*, 1936), and *Sisters of Gion* (*Gion no kyodai*, 1936), stories of exploited women in contemporary Japan. They were made during an intense debate about the role of prostitution in Japanese society in particular and the outrage against corrupting Western influences in general. Mizoguchi funded these two films through Dai-Ichi Eiga, an independent operation he set up, and thus the two films received uneven distribution, and bankrupted his new company. He then went back to the Japanese studio system.



12.15 *The Life of Oharu* or *Saikaku ichidai onna* (Kenji Mizoguchi, 1952).

Stylistically Mizoguchi adopted an alternative, non-Hollywood style which utilized very long takes (in terms of time), and complicated camera movements, often involving cranes and dollies. In 1942, for example, with his two-part *The Loyal Forty-Seven Ronin* (*Genroku chushingura*, 1942) Mizoguchi held his shots for several minutes or more at a time, when Hollywood rarely had a take over 30 seconds. After working for the government during the Second World War, Mizoguchi returned to his interest in the emancipation of

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women. With screenwriter Yoda and star Kinuyo Tanaka, he set to work creating dramas about women in both historical and modern settings including *The Victory of Women* (*Josei no shori*, 1946), *Utamaro and His Five Women* (*Utamaro wo meguru gonin no onna*, 1946), *The Love of Sumako the Actress* (*Joyu Sumako no koi*, 1947), and *Women of the Night* (*Yoru no onnatachi*, 1948). With *The Life of Oharu* (1952) Mizoguchi won a prize at the Venice Film Festival, at which point critics in Europe “discovered” a new Japanese master; *Cahiers du Cinéma* praised his work and the young men of the French New Wave studied his past films.

What they saw with *Ugetsu* and *Sansho the Bailiff* was a filmmaker near the end of his career turning away from socio-political critiques to the contemplations of an older man. The crux of this change can be seen in Mizoguchi’s treatment of women. In his earlier films he protests the plight of women, while in these later films he depicts the woman as a self-sacrificer and mother. In general, *Ugetsu* advocated the acceptance of one’s given lot in the world. Mizoguchi’s conversion to Buddhism in the early 1950s seems to explain part of this thematic shift in his films.

Yasujiro Ozu (1903–1965) was also discovered outside Japan in the years after the Second World War. Yet he too had started his career as a director at the end of the silent era. Ozu was another longtime professional who made films for Japanese studios for more than 40 years. He considered himself, like John Ford in the United States, just a filmmaker (rather than an auteur), regularly producing profitable films for Japanese audiences.

Ozu spent the early part of his career learning his craft in the Japanese studio system. In 1923 at age 20 he signed up to work for Shochiku as an assistant cameraman. Four years after that came his first directing credit, *The Sword of Penitence* (*Zange no Yaiba*, 1927). Between 1927 and 1935 Ozu directed 32 films, principally comedies about college students, gangster films, and modern dramas. By 1936 he had earned a place of respect and began to specialize in the *shomin-geki*, the “home drama.” Typical films dealt with raising children, finding employment, settling marital conflict, marrying off sons and daughters, and becoming grandparents. It was in this genre that Ozu made his greatest films.

During his long career Ozu often seemed to be making the same “home drama” over and over again. Indeed, he made *A Story of Floating Weeds* (*Ukikusa monogatari*) twice, in 1934 as a black-and-white



12.16 Shots from *A Story of Floating Weeds* or *Ukikusa monogatari* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1934) and the remake *Floating Weeds* or *Ukikusa* in color (Yasujiro Ozu, 1959). The setting has moved from a train station to a harbor (1 and 4); the same post office. Notice the big scales (2 and 5); flags announcing the visiting theatre group (3 and 6).

silent film, then again as simply *Floating Weeds* (*Ukikusa*, 1959) in color with sound. The latter version reflects Ozu at the height of his powers. His style of long takes, of never-ending space, of carefully structured mise-en-scène created a particular tension as a man tries to unite with his broken family.

Ozu manipulated the home drama in fascinating ways. He suggested that many family problems extended far beyond generational squabbles, and believed that rather Japanese society constrained individual lives. In his pre-war films of the late 1930s, Ozu even went so far as to criticize Japanese industry and government bureaucracy. After the war he shifted to a more mystical level. A cycle of nature (the young replacing the old, uncontrollable by materialist forces), for example, establishes the melancholy found in *An Autumn Afternoon* (*Samma no aji*, 1962) and *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo monogatari*, 1953).

Ozu was fascinated with the Classical Hollywood cinema, but rather than let the story be told invisibly, he maintained a fairly consistent ratio of camera height to the subject, thus permitting a narrow range of camera changes. Ozu loved depth of field: creating a shot down the complete length of a corridor, for example. He abandoned the Hollywood 180-degree rule in favor of a 360-degree space. To the trained Hollywood eye, this technique resulted in “incorrect” matches, but it allowed Ozu to explore the complete locus of action. He also frequently employed shots of empty spaces, not as establishing shots, but to punctuate the action. He rejected fades and dissolves. With these traits Ozu was able to fashion a unique, masterful style within the confines of a popular mass production entertainment industry.

Tokyo Story (1953) is a complex work which illustrates how Ozu’s films differ from the Classical Hollywood films or European artistic alternatives. *Tokyo Story* skips details Hollywood would center on, and it lingers over other moments which Hollywood would consider less dramatic. Ozu plays an interesting psychological game with his audience. Only as the narrative progresses do the preceding events get their true meaning and emotional color. For example, the starting point of the narrative – parents who visit their children and grandchildren – does not seem very telling but when the parents are not received very heartily and it turns out that this was the mother’s last visit, it becomes a significant incident revealing the actual relationship between parents and children. The same goes for an insignificant walk along the seaside during which the mother does not feel well. She thinks this is caused by a sleepless night and so does the viewer, but it becomes an omen in retrospect when we hear of her death.



12.17 Shots from *Tokyo Story* or *Tokyo monogatari* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1953). Crossing the 180 degree line: the old man sits on the left (1); the camera has moved from where the woman stands to the other side of the room. The old man now sits on the right (2 and 4); the camera is back in position one, only closer (3 and 5).

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Ozu positioned the characters in the frame in such a way that every viewer understands how they are emotionally related. For example, when the grandmother strolls with her unwilling grandson, Ozu shows them in a far shot thus indicating the distance between them and the vain attempts of the grandmother to get closer to her grandson. Ozu slowly pulls the viewer into the narrative and makes him feel the wordless grief of the parents.

In an Ozu film, scenes do not begin and end with establishing shots. Instead of classic wipes or dissolves, Ozu often employed shots of spaces not important to the story, but close by to the action. In the opening of *Tokyo Story*, for example, there are five shots of the port town of Onomichi (the bay, school children, a passing train) before the central characters of the film, the grandparents, are introduced as they pack for a visit to Tokyo. Ozu also cuts in a non-Hollywood manner. For example, he violates the typical Hollywood sense of staging action by constantly crossing over into unknown screen space. He matches on movement, but often across the plane of action. To an audience trained on Hollywood's rules, it takes some time to locate where you are.

Ozu remained faithful to his unique style and popular genre to the end. *An Autumn Afternoon* (1962), his final film, opens with a series of shots of chimneys from different angles, and only then proceeds to the corridor of an office building in preparation for introducing Shuhei Hirayama, a company executive. This slow rhythmic pace is characteristic of Ozu at his best. *An Autumn Afternoon* continues a style of low angled, static shots cut to emphasize the complete 360-degree space, punctuated by shots of rooms, streets, or landscapes in which no human is present. To the end, Ozu was a filmmaker who was able to work and even thrive within a studio system, yet create a cinema which today seems almost radical in its style.

Since the 1980s the Japanese art film has come under increasing pressure. Declining cinema attendance numbers led producers to create films with as much commercial potential as possible. Kurosawa still worked on, but he was an exception. Both studio and independent producers were looking for young filmmakers who understood the taste of young audiences. This led for example to the revival of the Gojira monster films, known in the West as Godzilla. In 1954 the mutated dinosaur first appeared in *Gojira* and marked a long series of Godzilla films.

Another very popular genre became anime, which is short for "animation." In 1988 the anime *Totoro: Our Neighbour* (*Tonari no totoro*, 1988), directed by Hayao Miyazaki, was announced the best film of the year by Kinema Jumbo. The popularity of the anime is closely connected to that of the manga comic-books and many anime films are based on them. As we write the anime genre is widely admired and is receiving increasing attention in the West. Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*, 2001) received many prizes including the Oscar for Best Animated Feature. His next feature-length anime *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no ugoku shiro*, 2004) was again a world-wide success. It is too early to tell which anime films will enter the film canon but it is very likely those of Miyazaki will. Other possible candidates are films like Katshurio Otomo's *Akira* (1988) and Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (*Kidotai kokako*, 1995).

Japan, Russia and other nations that formerly made up the USSR, South America, and Australia strive to retain national film productions, many of which find their way to audiences around the world at film festivals.



12.18 *Spirited Away* or *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001).

CASE STUDY 12

FILM FESTIVALS

To general audiences, film festivals like Cannes or Berlin often look like big parties with red carpets, “beautiful people,” and grand sounding awards. But the importance of film festivals goes way beyond the glamour and publicity. Why are they so important?

At least 1,300 film festivals are organized each year. Most of these are local or regional festivals. Only 52 of them are the so-called A-festivals which are recognized by the prestigious International Federation of Film Producers Associations (Federation Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films or FIAPF), based in Paris.

The reasons for organizing a film festival can range from showcasing the yearly national film harvest to presenting an overview of a certain kind of non-mainstream Hollywood fare from documentary, and short subjects to literary adaptations.

These films are all seeking to be picked up by distributors. That is, film festivals seek to introduce audiences to alternative films not often found in movie theaters. All film festivals take pride in discovering young talents.

When a festival jury and/or a festival audience recognize a film, it is elevated from the bulk of movies produced around the world and its chances to become acknowledged by an art-cinema audience are increased. Since film festival programmers are the ones who decide what new films will be introduced to the festival audience, they have become important gatekeepers. Their choices can have far reaching consequences for the distribution of a film.

Indeed, the significance of film festivals goes beyond the screening of the new harvest as they have become increasingly important in the financing of the independent film. At the so-called “cine markets,” film directors, producers, and financiers are put in contact with each other, and sometimes direct financial support is offered.

The Cannes Film Festival created the Cinéfondation to support new filmmakers and to help them gain access to international financing. Its Marché du Film (Film Market) was founded in 1959 and has become an important meeting place for film producers, sellers, distributors, and financiers. The Berlin Film Festival has the European Film Market with the Berlinale Co-Production Market. The festival also funds the World Cinema Fund that supports production and distribution of cultural films. In China, the Shanghai International Film Festival supports the film industry with the SIFF Film Market and selects projects for international co-production under the name of Co-production Film Pitch and Catch. In the USA the most important film festival for independent films is the Sundance Festival which arranges the Independent Producers Conference that brings together talented young producers with reputable professionals. In addition, it offers an annual Directors and Screenwriters Lab to young filmmakers from all over the world.

Film festivals are the forerunners of film history. There new filmmakers are discovered. As a festival visitor you are part of this voyage of discovery and, however small your voice, you contribute to the direction in which film history will develop.



12.19 Marché du Film 2010 in Cannes.

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THE VIDEO TO DIGITAL ERA 1977–2010



FILM HISTORY

1970

1980

1979: Hong Kong New Wave

1984: China Star Entertainment founded
1984: PG-13 movie rating created

FILM

1979: *The Butterfly Murders*

1984: *Yellow Earth*
1986: *A Better Tomorrow*
1987: *Red Sorghum*
1989: *Jou Dou*

HISTORY

1976: Death of Mao Zedong, China begins to
open to the West

1980: CNN established
1981: Personal Computer (PC) introduced
by IBM
1981: AIDS 1st identified
1985: Wreck of Titanic discovered
1986: Chernobyl nuclear accident
1989: Berlin Wall falls
1989: Students massacred in Tiananmen
Square, China

1990

2000

1990s: Rise of independent film in the US
1995: DVDs introduced to consumer market
1997: GATT Treaty
1995: Lars von Trier announces *Dogme 95*

2001: Harry Potter & Lord of the Rings franchises released
2002: Popular Indian film *Devdas* screened in the main program of the Cannes Film Festival
2003: *Amélie* becomes highest-grossing French-language film in the US ever
2009: *Avatar* becomes highest-grossing film ever

1991: *Raise the Red Lantern*
1993: *Farewell My Concubine*
1994: Disney's *The Lion King*
1994: *Pulp Fiction*
1997: *Happy Together*
1997: *Titanic*
1998: *Festen* and *The Idiots* (Dogme 95)

2000: *In the Mood for Love*
2000: *Erin Brockovich*
2001, 2002, 2003: *Lord of the Rings* trilogy
2004: *House of Flying Daggers*
2006: *The Holiday*
2007: *No Country for Old Men*
2008: *Slumdog Millionaire*
2009: *It's Complicated*

1990: Nelson Mandela is freed
1991: Collapse of Soviet Union
1991: South Africa repeals apartheid laws
1992: Official end of Cold War
1994: Rwandan Genocide
1994: Nelson Mandela elected president of South Africa
1997: Deng Xiaoping dies
1997: British relinquish Hong Kong, which becomes a "Special Administrative Region of China"
1997: India's population exceeds 1 billion
1999: Euro becomes new European currency

2001: 9/11 terrorist attack, New York
2001: US & NATO invade Afghanistan
2003: Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes Governor of California
2003–present: US-led coalition invades Iraq
2004: Indian Ocean earthquake results in massive tsunami
2005: Hurricane Katrina
2005: 7/7 terrorist attack, London
2007: US financial crisis triggers global recession
2009: Barack Obama becomes President of US



CHAPTER 13

CONTEMPORARY WORLD CINEMA HISTORY – 1977 AND BEYOND

Introduction

A short history of China's mainland

Hong Kong action films

Danish Dogme 95

Film in India

The future

Case study 13: Historical film research in the digital age

INTRODUCTION

In the previous sections of this book we have summarized how the history of movies – technologically, economically, socially, and aesthetically – has changed over time. We relied on film historical analyses, and created periods which relied on some perspective on when another period had begun. In 2010 we simply cannot say whether the contemporary era has ended. We thus have to turn to what is called “contemporary history,” that is, the study of the recent past. This presents many pitfalls.

First how can the historian be objective? The recent past still sparks debates (thus contemporary history has been often labeled “current affairs”). Second, the data is not complete: archival deposits are still being made about movie as mass culture as the contemporary historian tries to deal with the recent past. Third, periods can only be postulated and it becomes difficult to separate simple chronology.

Since we have used technological change as the major criterion for defining periods, we can identify when the period of contemporary history commenced, but not when it ended. This “recent past” commenced as video (cameras and playback machines) and satellites changed the movie practices of the past.

First, the way fans watched movies changed fundamentally in the 1970s. The VCR, then the DVD, and currently the computer have changed the way most people in most developed nations watch films. While the theatrical model survives, it accounts for fewer and fewer viewings. Likewise the innovation of cable TV and satellite TV offered movie showing around the clock. Space satellites have made it easy to distribute video around the world. Watching in a theater has become the exception.

Filmmakers, therefore, started to make independent films on video. For the last decades of the late twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, futurists predicted the end of film on celluloid. Will this happen? As film historians we think not, but can only guess.

Hollywood has embraced a blockbuster model based on this new technology. They produce expensive films, distribute them around the world, and première them theatrically. In that way Hollywood has maintained its power and appeal around the world while nationally supported film industries in the rest of the world have tried to cope with Hollywood’s appeal and power in varied ways. For example, as the twentieth century ended, new film cultures developed both in Europe (the Danish “Dogme 95”) and Asia (China, Hong Kong) and India.

The “recent past” is still developing what the new mainland China will become. With the death of **Mao Zedong** in 1976, the anti-capitalist mainland China began to open up – permitting movies from the West to be shown. Slowly the new Chinese authorities have opened up the nation to artistic filmmaking. By the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called Fifth Generation movie directors like Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou thrived as auteurs, but we do not know if there will be yet another generation.

Likewise, until 1995, Hong Kong was a British colony but then became a special administrative region of mainland China. Hong Kong had a longstanding film tradition and in the last quarter of the twentieth century it saw the creation of both popular filmmakers like Jackie Chan and John Woo as well as art-film director Wong Kar Wai. But will a thriving Hong Kong cinema continue?

Finally, many would be surprised to learn that the nation that makes the most films as the twentieth century ended was not Hollywood but India. For decades (as discussed in Chapter 1) India had long maintained a diversified and rich film culture, in some 20 different languages. But while these films proved continuously popular in India few were seen as exports until satellite TV transmitted them throughout the world. Does this mean that Indian films will become popular around the globe?

*Mao Zedong
(1893–1976)
was leader of
the Chinese
Communist
Party from 1935
until 1976,
and founder of
the People’s
Republic of
China in 1949.*

Film historians have to make choices as it is impossible to cover every film industry in one book. So we focused on what we considered the most important cinemas. The Indian, Chinese, Hong Kong, and Danish Dogme films, we argue, will make their way into film history. Their story-telling and cinematography increasingly have drawn the attention of Western film scholars and we are amongst them.

Historical analysis cannot tell the future and so we conclude our analyses in 2010. We know movies will continue, and there is evidence that by way of television, they will be seen well into the future. Some speculate a global movie world. But we still see national cinemas battling against Hollywood and struggling to maintain national identities. We devote this chapter to understanding the most significant changes in cinema as a national culture apparatus, beginning literally with the biggest change during the late twentieth century – the opening up of mainland China to films from other nations and the fashioning of a Chinese film industry.

A SHORT HISTORY OF CHINA'S MAINLAND

To fully understand the contemporary history of cinema in mainland China, an historian must begin in 1949 when, after a civil war, Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). From that moment on China became a one-party nation, and still is today. In the 1950s the CCP began to nationalize the film industry to convey an ideological message. Under the Ministry of Culture, the Central Film Management Bureau supervised the production, distribution, and all the movie theaters in mainland China. The Bureau sent out mobile projection teams to reach distant and isolated parts of the vast nation. The Chinese authorities created a special committee to censor all films before screening and it excluded Western movies. By 1952, all film studios were nationalized and all film scripts had to be approved by the authorities. Filmmakers were supposed to model their work after that of their colleagues in the USSR, as this communist country shared the same basic ideological assumptions. The CCP “stimulated” films with stories of the recently won war with Japan and the “happy” lives of peasants and workers under Communism.

In 1966 a dark period of China's mainland history started when Mao Zedong announced the so-called Cultural Revolution in order to end all old structures of power. Any person whose family history traced back to aristocracy, landownership, or other wealth became a suspect; so did anyone with an advanced college degree, intellectuals, and artists. All suspects were sent in large numbers to isolated and underdeveloped parts of China to learn from the peasants and working classes. The consequences of the Cultural Revolution and other policies of Mao were disastrous. Famines raged through the country and a whole generation grew up uneducated.

Filmmakers did not escape this new policy. Mao appointed his wife, Jian Qing, head of national film production and she personally decided which films had the right or wrong ideological content. She black-listed many older Chinese films, and sent many film directors to the countryside to be “re-educated.” The Cultural Revolution lasted ten years and only ended with the death of Mao in 1976. During this decade, Chinese movie production almost ceased.

The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) started in 1937 when Japan occupied large parts of eastern China and ended when the Second World War was over and Japan had surrendered to the allies.

After the Cultural Revolution: the Fourth Generation

Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping ended Mao's Cultural Revolution, and started China toward more liberal policies. In the 1980s, a stream of written work poured out of the new China. Authors, who often fled to

the West, wrote about their traumatic sufferings during the Cultural Revolution. Because of their gripping nature, many of these books were translated and found their way in large numbers to Western audiences. Most famous is Jung Chang's *Wild Swans*, which was translated into more than 30 languages.

Deng Xiaoping

Chinese communist leader who initiated economic reforms and allowed relatively personal freedom after Mao Zedong's death in 1976. His economic policies led to a rise in living standards and improved China's position in the world market.

For movie makers it proved difficult to expose the wrongs of the former leaders. They stayed in China and had to function inside a system that despite the increasing freedom was still heavily censored. Most films of the so-called "Fourth Generation" ("generation" refers to the period in which they received their film education) only mildly criticized the Cultural Revolution.

Since the members of the Fourth Generation had been educated before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, most of them were not familiar with movies from the West. At the beginning of the 1980s, however, two film directors, Zhang Nuanxin and her husband Li Tou On saw and were inspired by the films of the French New Wave and Italian Neo-realism, and published a manifesto titled "The Modernization of Film Language." Like the French film theorist André Bazin, they recognized that film should be respected and regarded as a visual art with specific means of expression and specific characteristics.

According to film historian Yingjin Zhang, the films of the Fourth Generation can best be characterized by their documentary look and their non-dramatic structures. They did not have a great appeal to Chinese audiences and only half way through the first decade of the twenty-first century reached audiences outside mainland China. To honor the Fourth Generation, the International Film Festival Rotterdam in the Netherlands programmed 12 films as a retrospective in 2008. With the help of the Beijing Film Archive, the programmers traced the films and invited directors to the festival where they personally introduced their films and answered questions after the screening.



13.1 Shots from *In the Wild Mountains* or *Yeshan* (Yan Xueshu, 1986). The unhappy man and woman that will divorce.

The Fourth Generation films shown in Rotterdam confirmed the documentary look, and the psychological depth of their characters. However, the non-dramatic structure of these films showed considerable difference ranging from a very loose structure to a straightforward narrative. For example, the main characters in Teng Wenji's *At the Beach* (*Hai tan*, 1984) do not have a specific goal and seem to wander through life. In 2008 Teng Wenji reflected that he simply wanted to show the antithesis between the city and the country, and how increasing industrialization affected the environment. Other films like Wu Yigong's *Memories of Old Beijing* (*Chengnan jiushi*, 1983), Wu Tianming's *River without Buoys* (*Meiyou hangbiao de*

helio, 1983), Yan Xueshu's *In the Wild Mountains* (*Yeshan*, 1986), Zhang Zheng's *Little Flower* (*Xiaohua*, 1979) and Zhang Nuanxin's *Sacrificed Youth* (*Qingchun ji*, 1985) possessed quite clear dramatic structures. Abandonment, being away from loved ones, and the search for kindred spirits were recurrent themes. This comes as no surprise since besides the hundred thousands of people that Mao sent to the country for re-education, many Chinese also voluntarily left the safe place of hearth and home to serve the revolution. With this in mind, the films of the Fourth Generation can be regarded as a way of coming to terms with the pain and sorrow of the Cultural Revolution, even though this is not always addressed directly in the films.

The Fifth Generation

"The Fifth Generation" followed and refers to the fifth group of student filmmakers who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy, starting in 1982. This cohort began their studies after the Cultural Revolution. Unlike their predecessors, they were allowed to watch films other than those approved by Chinese and Soviet authorities. This Fifth Generation could thus draw their inspiration from other film cultures as well. Two of them became famous: Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou. They attracted attention because of their complex film style with smooth camera movements and rich use of color that appealed to film festival planners, film journalists, and film academics in the West. In 1985 Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (*Huang tudi*, 1984) won the Silver Leopard Prize at the Locarno (Switzerland) International Film Festival. In 1988 the Berlin Film Festival awarded its top prize, the Golden Bear, for the first time to a Chinese film, Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang*, 1987).

Directors Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou became the best known representatives of the Fifth Generation. Their films proved attractive for Western audiences because they showed a China with recognizable dramatic dilemmas like individuals versus family interests and love versus betrayal. But while praised in Europe, many of their films proved unattractive to Chinese audiences because of their controversial content. While critics in Europe praised Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* (1989), for example, it was criticized at home, where it was believed that the story of a woman betraying her husband crossed all bounds of decency. For another example, Tian Zhuangzhuang also proved controversial. Tian Zhuangzhuang's first film *Horse Thief* (*Dao ma zei*, 1986) did not appeal to Chinese audiences; Tian stated that he made films for the next generation of audiences. Thereafter, he created movies that were more in accordance with traditional Chinese taste: *Drum Singers* (*Gushu yiren*, 1987), and *Rock 'n' Roll Kids* (*Yaogun qingnian*, 1988). After the June 1989 events of **Tiananmen Square**, Tian became known outside China with *The Blue Kite* (*Lan fengzheng*, 1993) a film about the Cultural Revolution told from the perspective of a child. The film was released abroad without the permission of the Chinese censors and Tian was not allowed to make another film for the next three years.



13.2 *Yellow Earth* or *Huang tudi* (Chen Kaige, 1984). Recurring picture of impressive landscapes (1); the revolutionary song collector (2); the girl watching the song collector – she wants to join the revolution (3).

Tiananmen Square Protests 1989

Student protests demanding democratic reforms that started in the spring of 1989 and culminated in a large demonstration at the Tiananmen Square lasting several weeks. In the night of 3–4 June 1989 Chinese troops were ordered to shoot at the protesters, thus ending it in violence.

Directors of the Fifth Generation

Chen Kaige was born in Beijing in 1952. Like many of his generation, he was sent to the countryside to be reformed and re-educated as a teenager. With liberalization, Chen Kaige studied at the Beijing Film Academy and even went to New York University in 1987 to study for another two years. By then he had already made *Yellow Earth* (*Huang tudi*, 1984) and *The Big Parade* (*Da yuebing*, 1985) with his former classmates Zhang Yimou, He Qun, and Zhang Junzhao at the small Guangxi Film Studio. Zhang Yimou was camera operator for *Yellow Earth*. The film was warmly received at the Hong Kong Film Festival, and the Locarno Festival (Switzerland) awarded it the Silver Leopard award but many thought it incomprehensible.

Chen Kaige's biggest success in the West was *Farewell My Concubine* (*Bawang bieji*, 1993), an international co-production with Hong Kong studios. The film tells an absorbing story of two men, paired to each other by their old opera master when they were still children. He chose them for the parts of the emperor and his concubine in the famous Chinese opera "Farewell My Concubine." (In traditional Chinese opera it is common that female parts are played by males.) The climax of the opera is the ritual suicide of the concubine when the emperor is defeated. Her death frees the emperor of his obligation to look after her. This key scene recurs through the film and stands for the life-long relationship between the two men. In *Farewell My Concubine*, Chen Kaige ties the individual histories of the two men to recent Chinese history and shows how the Japanese war and the Cultural Revolution had corrupted friendships and destroyed lives. Stylistically, *Farewell My Concubine* was filled with richly designed sets, complex lighting, and smooth and stylish camera movements. In 1993 the film was awarded the Palme d'Or in Cannes



13.3 *Farewell my Concubine* or *Bawang bieji* (Chen Kaige, 1993). Shots from the climax of the film in which Xiaolou (Fengyi Zhang) (2) denounces both Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) (1) and his wife Juxian (Gong Li) (3).

and became celebrated wherever movies were studied outside China.

Zhang Yimou (born 1951) was trained as a cinematographer at the Beijing Film Academy. He did the camera work for his former classmates in *One and Eight* (*Yi ge he ba ge*, Zhang Juanzhao, 1984), and Wu Tianming's *Old Well* (*Lao jing*, 1987) in which he also acted. In 1987 Zhang Yimou directed his first film – *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang*, 1987). Earning a Golden Bear prize at the Berlin Film Festival in 1988, *Red Sorghum* showed how old traditions could be replaced by new ones, and exposed the cruelties of the Japanese during the Second World War. The film opens with a wide shot of a barren, sandy landscape where a beautiful young woman, concealed inside a bride's traditional closed red sedan (the color red symbolizes luck and happiness and is used for weddings), is carried by men singing out



13.4 Shots from *Red Sorghum* or *Hong gaoliang* (Zhang Yimou, 1987).

loud and shaking the chair to annoy the young bride inside who is being taken to the old man she was married off to. Although tradition does not allow, Jiu'er – played by the stunningly beautiful Gong Li – peeps through a small opening in the red curtain. Her gaze is caught by one of the carriers and on that very moment they fall in love. The carrier will not let go of her, and will release Jiu'er from her forced marriage. Old traditions are replaced by new ones. This is stressed again when after the mysterious death of the old man Jiu'er abolishes the hierarchical structures at the vineyard.

The sorghum field is the silent witness of this history and symbolizes the condition of the characters. It waves gracefully like a green sea around the bed of leaves on which Jiu'er and the carrier make love, and it is crudely trampled down when the Japanese occupy the country. The use of color is complex creating a lush look that radiates warmth and happiness by the abundant use of all shades of red. The bright red of the sedan, the warm orange red and ochre when the first wine harvest is processed, the brownish red when Jiu'er prepares the meal in anticipation of the return of the men who set a trap for the Japanese soldiers, and the blood red, brown, and orange when the exploding Japanese tank kills Jiu'er.



13.5 Use of colour in *Ju Dou* (Yang Fengliang and Zhang Yimou, 1990).

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With *Ju Dou* (1989) Zhang Yimou explored the same theme of a woman's right to choose her own partner. Again a woman, Ju Dou, is married off; this time to the owner of a fabric coloring plant, an old man to whom she is supposed to bear a son to secure the family line. Ju Dou starts a secret affair with the old man's nephew but love does not triumph. Old traditions make it impossible to take their love into the open; not even after the old man's death can they enjoy each other's company. The fabric coloring plant, where long, dyed cloths hang out to dry, provides the dramatic setting for a final spectacular scene when Ju Dou sets the workplace on fire. Until 1992 *Ju Dou* was forbidden in China because of the immoral content.

Zhang Yimou pressed on. His *Raise the Red Lantern* (*Da hong denglong gaogao gua*, 1991) was also about a forced marriage. Gong Li plays the fourth wife of a wealthy landowner who is slowly driven mad by the manipulations of his other wives. Her claustrophobic experience is symbolized by the recurring high angle shots situated within a square shaped inner yard defined by the walls and the roofs of the house.

After *Raise the Red Lantern*, Zhang Yimou turned another corner with *The Story of Qiuju* (*Qiuju da guansi*, 1992), a film in documentary style about the wife of a farmer who seeks justice and is sent from one court to another. Chinese audiences liked the film and it found favor in the eyes of the Chinese censors because its production coincided with a campaign to inform citizens of their legal rights. *The Story of Qiuju* received many prizes both in China and abroad. It was awarded the Golden Rooster (the main national award in China) and Venice's Golden Lion, both for best film in 1992.

In 2002, Zhang Yimou surprised the critics with a martial arts film *Hero* (*Ying Xiong*, 2002), followed by *House of Flying Daggers* (*Shi mian mai fu*) in 2004. Both films are characterized by an emphasis on style. The very balanced and carefully composed shots are cut at high speed and create a smooth, visual spectacle that appealed to young people in particular. *Hero* broke all box-office records on the mainland. In December 2009 Zhang Yimou's *A Simple Noodle Story* (*San qiang pai an jing qi*) premiered, a remake of the Hollywood-based Coen Brothers' *Blood Simple* (1985). In 2008 he directed the television broadcast of the opening ceremony and accompanying show of the Olympic Games in Beijing and turned the nationalistic and collective outing of the Chinese government into an abstract spectacle. Zhang Yimou also started working in the theater, directed operas, and even wrote the libretto for a ballet based on his film *Raise the Red Lantern* which premiered in 2001 and was still touring the world in 2010.

After the Fifth Generation

The Fifth Generation made their first films in exceptional circumstances. As soon as their scripts were approved, they did not need to worry about how to get funds and they could use all the facilities of the state-owned studios. Besides that they benefitted from the relatively lax film censorship. This lasted only a short time. In 1985, the Chinese government had already started to reform the system. First the rules for film distribution were changed, followed by the dismantling of the film studios.

After the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese had more alternatives for spending their leisure time. With the introduction of television in the 1980s, they increasingly decided not to go out to the movies. In 1985 the cinema box-office declined by a third, and even more for Chinese mainland movies. Hong Kong movies remained popular. During the first half of the 1980s the Chinese government decided to open up the distribution system. In 1992 the Chinese Party Congress officially announced the new "socialist market economy." The authorities transformed Chinese film distribution and theatrical admission pricing. The position of the Cinema Film Corporation as national distributor declined as studios were allowed to negotiate directly with local distributors on the basis of profit sharing. In Beijing a film market was set up where producers and distributors could meet and trade.

Most importantly, many mainland studios started to collaborate with Hong Kong studios and attract private investors. The mainland studios offered low staff wages and cheap rental fees for using studio facilities. However, in the end many films were not released on the mainland so the studios often only earned income from renting out the studio and did not get a share in the box-office profits. To create a more stable business, Chinese film studios explored new ways to earn money and started to produce for television. The Chinese government encouraged collaboration with television and the national broadcaster CCTV (China Central Television) started a film channel to air Chinese films. This increased audiences for Chinese films and generated extra income for film studios.

To stimulate the sales of cinema tickets, the Chinese government decided to open up the market for Hollywood films. From 1994 onwards ten Hollywood blockbusters could be imported yearly. These films turned out to be very popular (accounting for 70–80 percent of total box-offices sales in 1995) and did have the hoped-for effect: film audiences increased. The big budget Chinese films – often co-productions with Hong Kong – took advantage of this upsurge as well. This stimulated mainland film studios to invest more time and money in the production values of their films. Marketing became an important tool and more and more film stars were brought into action in advertising campaigns to pull in audiences.

However, the popularity of foreign films worried the Chinese government and in 1996 a new quota was announced: two-thirds of the screen time should be spent on indigenous production. To enhance the quality of domestic films, the right to distribute a foreign blockbuster was linked to the production of high budget (and high quality) Chinese movies. At the beginning of the 1990s, suspense thrillers, kung fu movies, melodramas, and comedies flooded the market, the last two being the most popular genres.

Still in 2010 strict film censorship remained one of the main problems in the PRC. This prevented many films from reaching the cinema screen and was a threat to film production; it caused filmmakers to produce “safe” and often not very appealing films. Young directors of the so-called “Sixth Generation” tried to circumvent this and produced low-budget films without permission. After completion they shipped them abroad to be premiered and distributed in the West. These films were populated by young urban characters dealing with misfortune, often drop-outs, and treated forbidden subjects like alcoholism, homosexuality, underground rock music, and the negative consequences of the economic reforms.

Zhang Yuan's *Beijing Bastards* (*Beijing zazhong*, 1993) for example, featured semi-documentary footage of rebel singer Cui Jian. His *Sons* (*Erzi* 1996) dealt with the terrible impact of an alcoholic father on his family and *East Palace, West Palace* (*Donggong xigong*, 1997) openly showed homosexuality. Zhang Yuan's films were systematically banned by Chinese authorities. Another so-called Sixth Generation filmmaker, Jia Zhangke made a trilogy on the negative aspects of the economic reforms: *Pickpocket* (*Xiao Wu*, 1998), *Platform* (*Zhantai*, 2000), and *Unknown Pleasures* (*Ren xiaoyao*, 2002).

Other contemporary filmmakers produced more optimistic pictures. For example, Zhang Yang's films *Spicy Love Soup* (*Aiqing malatang*, 1998) and *Shower* (*Xizao*, 1999) dealt with urban youngsters in a much more positive way. Both films were very successful



13.6 *Shower* or *Xizao* (Zhang Yang, 1999). The full automatic shower – all you have to do is stand still.

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with domestic audiences and hit the top five of the highest grossing films in their year of release. But these few exceptions could not make up for the rest of China's film industry. Chinese audiences still seemed to prefer Hollywood blockbusters and ignored many domestic films.

HONG KONG ACTION FILMS

Hong Kong was under British control until 1997, but then became a Special Administrative Region of mainland China. Hong Kong had long been one of the most capitalist places of the world. The Communist authorities of China's mainland kept the capitalist system in place under the adage "one country, two systems."

Hong Kong had a long standing tradition in filmmaking, but except for films of the Kung Fu star Bruce Lee, very little was known about it in the West. Nearby Asia – especially Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia – provided the main markets for these films. Most of the Hong Kong movies only reached the "Chinatowns" of the big cities in the West filled with expatriates. Only beginning in the 1980s and 1990s did Hong Kong movies start to attract more attention in the West. This was mostly due to the popularity of the films of Jackie Chan and, later on, John Woo. Chan and Woo came to represent the mainstream Hong Kong movies all over the world to fans of martial arts movies.

The Shaw Brothers and the Cathay Company

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many filmmakers fled from the mainland to British Hong Kong where they helped to rebuild the Hong Kong film industry that had been destroyed during the Japanese occupancy. These filmmakers started to produce films in Mandarin, their native tongue. Thus, Hong Kong audiences could choose films produced in two languages: Cantonese and Mandarin. Until the end of the 1970s, there was a clear difference between these two. The Mandarin films had a higher production value as more money was spent on the settings and costumes, and the cinematography was done with more care. Films in Cantonese were often produced with low budgets – sometimes the shooting took only one week – and they were based upon traditional Chinese operas. Local audiences loved these movies even though (or perhaps just because) they were quite theatrical, slowly paced, and firmly rooted in the Chinese opera tradition.

The year 1958 proved a turning point in the development of the Mandarin cinema in Hong Kong. That year Run Run Shaw, together with his brother Runme, reorganized the Shaw and Sons studio and



13.7 Film producer Run Run Shaw talking with a few of his actors at Movietown.

founded the film production company Shaw Brothers based in Hong Kong. In 1961 a 46-acre complex called Movietown was opened. It had ten sound stages, numerous standing sets, and even living quarters for employees. In its heyday in the 1960s, Movietown operated 24 hours a day. To train his staff Run Run Shaw hired foreign technicians from Taiwan, Korea, and Japan.

The second big studio was MP&GI (Motion Picture & General Investment). This studio was part of the Singapore-based Cathay Company that was run by Loke Wan Tho. He came from a rich family that had immigrated to Malaysia already in the nineteenth century. Loke Wan Tho took his education in Switzerland, and started out as a cinema owner. He founded the International Theater Ltd in 1948, which bought theater after theater. The following year he broadened his field of activity and took on the distribution of English language films. He became a direct rival of the Shaw Brothers when he started his own film production in 1953.

Both studios became involved in a keen competition. They tried to snatch away each other's staff and stars, and stole ideas. Sometimes both studios even filmed the same story and raced to première first. For example, both studios started with the adaptation of Zhang Henshui's novel *Fate in Tears in Laughter* (*Tixiao yinyuan*). The filmed version of the Shaw Brothers was called *Between Tears and Laughter* (*Gudu chunmeng*, 1964), that of the MP&GI studio *A Story of Three Loves* (*Jinghua chunmeng*, Wang Tianlin, 1964). The competition came to an end when MP&GI closed its doors in 1972, eight years after the tragic airplane accident that had cost the life of its head, Loke Wan Tho.

MP&GI specialized in musicals and comedies with many youthful stars that appealed to young audiences. One of them was Grace Chang (Ge Lan) who had moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1949. She became famous with *Mambo Girl* (*Manbo guniang*, Yi Wen, 1957), a marvellous film in which song and dance is tightly woven into the narrative. Even for contemporary audiences *Mambo Girl* looks amazingly fresh. This film celebrates youth culture, but there are no conflicts between adults and youngsters; even the parents love the parties of the teenagers. The music is a combination of the MGM musical of the 1950s and melodious ballads from the Great American songbook. The title refers to the "Mambo," a Cuban dance and a forerunner of the Cuban Cha Cha. Both were performed elaborately on film. Grace Chang was trained as a classical Chinese opera singer. In 1959 she was invited by NBC (a US TV network) to appear on the "Dinah Shore variety show" on 25 October 1959.



13.8 Grace Chang in *Mambo Girl* or *Manbo guniang* (Yi Wen, 1957).

The Shaw Brothers took up youth films much later and kept on producing romantic melodramas and costume dramas based on or inspired by Chinese operas. Their star director was Li Hanxiang (1926) who was trained at the Beijing National Art Institute. In 1963 he made the costume drama *The Love Eternal* (*Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*, 1963) which became a hit. The same year he left the Shaw Brothers and started working in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Beijing. His big-budget melodramatic films were huge successes everywhere he went. He died in Beijing in 1996.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Shaw Brothers started to cooperate with Japanese and South Korean film producers who brought with them many technical innovations and new genres, thus broadening the scope of films produced by the Shaw Brothers to include musicals, spy thrillers, martial art films, adventure, and crime films.

The Golden Harvest Film Company

In 1970 a new period of the Hong Kong cinema started. In that year Raymond Chow together with Leonard Ho (He Guanchang) founded the Golden Harvest Film Company. Raymond Chow had bought the Yonghua studio from Cathay and he contracted young actor and writer Bruce Lee, an American born in San Francisco in 1940 who had studied



13.9 Bruce Lee in *Fists of Fury* or *Tang sha da xiong* (Lo Wei, 1972).

Philosophy at the University of Washington in Seattle. Lee worked as an actor for US television shows, and owned a martial arts school. He had written some film scripts and offered them to the Shaw Brothers and to Golden Harvest. The Shaw Brothers passed but *Fists of Fury* (also known as *The Big Boss* [*Tang sha da xiong*], 1971) became Lee's first film for Golden Harvest. It proved a world-wide sensation.

Lee wrote, produced, and directed his next two films: *The Chinese Connection* (*Jing wu men*, 1972) and *The Way of the Dragon* (*Meng long guojiang*, 1972). He amazed audiences with his realistic combat scenes without any special effects, in which he used a singular technique called Jeet Kune Do that was based on a martial arts form especially designed for women and small people. In 1972, Lee died of a cerebral edema (a swelling in the brain) during the shooting of *Game of Death* (*Siwang youxi*, 1973), again written and directed by himself, and co-produced for Hollywood's Warner Bros. studio. Robert Clouse finished this last "Bruce Lee" film – with a stand in for Bruce Lee.



After Lee's death, Golden Harvest had a hard time finding a replacement. Only in 1978 did the company discover Jackie Chan, who developed a screen persona that combined humor with a fighting spirit. *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (*Shexing diaoshou*, 1978) proved that Chan's persona could be as popular with audiences as Bruce Lee's had been. Chan's next film *Drunken Master* (*Zuiquan*, Yuen Woo-Ping, 1978) became famous for its beautifully choreographed fighting scene that lasted no less than 15 minutes.



13.10 *Drunken Master* or *Zuiquan* (Yuen Woo-Ping, 1978). Shots from the final scene in which the young Jackie Chan performs all the gestures of the so-called 'drunken masters' in the final fight.

Jackie Chan (born 1954 in Hong Kong) trained in acrobatics, acting, singing, dancing, and martial arts at a Peking Opera Troup. He started working as a stuntman, martial arts actor, and extra for the

Shaw Brothers and still prides himself on doing all his own stunts. Much of his stunt work is an art in itself. In 1979, he directed his first film *Fearless Hyena* (*Xiaoquan guaizhao*, 1979). By the 1980s he had teamed up with two old time friends from the Opera Troupe, Sammo Hung (action director, actor, director, producer, scriptwriter, and stuntman) and Yuen Biao (known as Hong Kong's best acrobat). Together they became known as "the three brothers" and their work included: *Project A* (*A jihua*, 1984), *Wheels on Meals* (*Kuai canche*, 1984) and *Dragons Forever* (*Feilong mengjiang*, 1988). In *Project A*, Chan refers to Hollywood's Harold Lloyd's film *Safety Last* (1923) when he hangs on the hand of a clock tower.

In 1986, Chan directed *Armour of God* (*Longxiong hudi*, 1986) which became Hong Kong's highest grossing film of the decade. In 1985 Chan had created the first part of *Police Story* (*Jingcha gushi*, 1985), followed by *Police Story 2* (*Ging chaat goo si juk jaap*, 1988), and completed with *Police Story 3* (*Chaoji jingcha*, 1992). For *Police Story 3*, Chan asked Stanley Tong to direct and Tong introduced Michelle Yeoh as the female police partner of Chan. Tong also directed Chan's first big success in Hollywood, *Rumble in the Bronx* (1995), distributed by Warner's Bros.' New Line division.

Chan became world famous and, like Bruce Lee had been, a symbol for the Hong Kong action film. He became a cult figure in the USA and international film festivals started programming his films. In doing so, these festivals acknowledged his artistic status. In 1997 for example he was special guest of the Golden Harvest program at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Chan went back to Rotterdam the next year to shoot some scenes for *Who am I* (*Wo shi shei*, 1998). Chan thereafter produced his own films, sometimes with Hollywood companies and sometimes with ones based in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Studios have yet to drive out Hollywood, but found a niche to offer young male audiences the action films they sought.

The Hong Kong New Wave

During the second half of the 1970s, young Hong Kong filmmakers felt the need to create a kind of film different from the routine martial arts genre. Many of them were educated abroad (often in the West) and wanted to create more artistic and individual films than the ones produced in the big Hong Kong studios. These filmmakers became known as the Hong Kong New Wave. Triggered by the announcement in 1984 that the British would hand back Hong Kong to China in 1997 they started to create films that dealt with questions about identity and history.

A second characteristic of this New Wave was the mixing of different genres. Tsui Hark started the Hong Kong New Wave in 1979 with *The Butterfly Murders* (*Diebian*, 1979), a historical film with killer butterflies. Ann Hui directed *The Secret* (*Fengjie*, 1979), a mix of a murder mystery and a ghost story. The Hong Kong New Wave also left the confines of the studios and used small mobile cameras on location.



13.11 Shots from *The Butterfly Murders* or *Diebian* (Tsui Hark, 1979). Suspense is built up as the woman is unaware of the presence of her attacker.

In 1898 the British empire agreed with China to lease Hong Kong for 99 years. In 1997 Hong Kong turned from a British colony into a Special Administrative Region of China.

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Thanks to their daring, these and other young filmmakers easily crossed the boundaries between genres and pioneered use of modern digital techniques. Tsui Hark in particular proved key as he was able to create films that were visually complex and commercially successful. Tsui Hark (born in 1951) in Saigon, Vietnam (later called Ho Chi Min City), moved to Hong Kong in 1966. He later went to film school at the University of Texas-Austin in the USA, and worked for a cable television network that programmed Chinese movies in the USA. There is almost no genre Tsui did not try; he made costume, martial arts, action, fantasy, and comedy films. His titles sometimes play with famous titles of Hollywood films like *Dangerous Encounters – First Kind* (*Diyi leixing weixian*, 1980) and *Once upon a Time in China* (*Huang Feihong*, 1991). Tsui worked as a producer as well and, between 1979 and 2008, produced 21 of the 31 films he directed. Together with his wife Nansun Shi, he established his own production company The Film Workshop in 1984. He then teamed up with director and fellow member of the Hong Kong industry John Woo and produced *A Better Tomorrow* (*Yingxiong bense*, 1986).

A second generation of the Hong Kong New Wave appeared halfway through the 1980s. Directors like Stanley Kwan, the team of Cheung Yuen-tin and Alex Law, and the partners Clara Law and Eddie Fong were even more preoccupied with contemporary concerns. Many Hong Kong inhabitants were concerned about the future. How would the Communist Party respond to this pure capitalist territory? What would happen to their liberties? Part of the population did not wait for the answer and left the country. For example, the filmmaker couple Clara Law and Eddie Fong went to Australia as they believed it to be a better place – without commercial pressure or censorship – to produce their political films. Others just stayed and made (low-budget) films in which they analyzed the political and social situation.

One who stayed was Ann Hui who created many small dramas about characters in search of their identities when confronted with unfamiliar customs. Her characters are often interpreted as symbolizing the Hong Kong people trying to redefine their relation to the Chinese mainland. She also directed *Boat People* (*Touben nuhai*, 1982), *Song of the Exile* (*Ke tu qiu hen*, 1990), and *Summer Snow* (*Nüren sishi*, 1994). Ann Hui worked in both movie making and television and was one of the rare female filmmakers involved in the Hong Kong New Wave.

After the New Wave

The Hong Kong film industry met great difficulties as the 1990s ended. Between 1985 and 1995 the number of domestic films declined by 50 percent as cinema attendance dropped dramatically. Tickets had become expensive and piracy of easily available videos hurt theatrical business badly. In 1997 Hollywood profited when the **GATT treaty** made it easier for Hollywood to ship its films to Asia.

By the end of the 1990s, the new Hong Kong government took several measures to stimulate the domestic film industry: the Film Services Office, the Film Development Fund, and a scholarship program for upcoming talented filmmakers was started. The annual international film trade show was supported and Hong Kong films were marketed and supported at international film festivals in Berlin, London, Milan, and Sydney. In April 2003, the Hong Kong government started the Film Guarantee Fund to help local film production companies to get their films funded.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hong Kong film moguls have shifted their attention from production to distribution. Golden Harvest gave up on production in 2000, and started expanding its theater chain in the PRC, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. Phoon Chiong-kit, managing director of Golden Harvest, reasoned multiplexes would draw urban audiences back into the movie theaters. By 2004 box-office revenues of the PRC started rising again.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) regulates equal trade between its members.

China Star Entertainment, founded in 1984 by Charles Heung, started to focus on young female cinema audiences that preferred comedies, and was very successful with *Needing you* (*Goo naam gwa neu*, 2000) and *Love on a Diet* (*Sau san naam neu*, 2001) both directed by Johnnie To and Ka-Fai Wai, and starring pop singers Sammi Cheng and Andy Lau. China Star produced six to ten big budget movies annually in the first half of the 2000s. The company also worked out a new strategy to beat piracy by premiering films on video before the pirates could release them. Most remarkable of the new tactics was that China Star even used some of the pirates' distribution networks and sought to educate the shopkeepers on how to best present and sell their goods.

Media Asia was founded in 1994 and seven years later became a part of the multimedia multi-national conglomerate eSun. Media Asia started to invest heavily in the marketing of its new movies since it understood that marketing is an important key to success. It also introduced Hollywood special effects, giving its films a Hollywood look with local faces. *Infernal affairs* (*Mou gaan dou*, 2002) starring Andy Lau and Tony Leung became a huge hit. Warner Bros. bought the remake rights and Martin Scorsese directed *The Departed* (2006) starring Jack Nicholson, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Matt Damon.

In 2004, Hong Kong and the PRC signed an agreement that improved the position of the Hong Kong film industry dramatically. Until then, it still had trouble reaching mainland audiences as the PRC's authorities maintained strong censorship and considered Hong Kong-made movies as foreign. In 2004 the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) removed the import quotas for Hong Kong and relaxed the rules for co-production. This stimulated the Hong Kong film industry.

Hong Kong directors

John Woo (born 1946) at age three was taken by his family to Hong Kong from mainland China. Forty years later he became a beloved Hong Kong director. His late 1980s and early 1990s films made in Hong Kong combined extreme violence with strong emotions of love and friendship. Many critics have linked this to his upbringing in a poor, violence-ridden neighbourhood. Woo himself has stated that in his films he is looking for an ideal, peaceful world without war in which people can trust each other. The violence in his films is caused by betrayal and greed. In his films, true friends remain loyal to each other – even under the most extreme circumstances.

Woo's film style can be characterized as eclectic and his inspiration comes from many different sources: Chinese historical action films, Kurosawa's samurai films, Sergio Leone's westerns, and the gangster movies of Hollywood's Martin Scorsese and France's Jean-Pierre Melville. Woo started his career as script supervisor at the Cathay Studios. In 1972 he moved to the Shaw Brothers Studio to become an assistant to martial arts director Chang Che and learned how to choreograph and shoot action sequences. Two years later he started working with producer Raymond Chow at the Golden Harvest studio, and directed his first feature *The Young Dragons* (*Tie han rou qing*, 1974), with Jackie Chan and Chan Chuen directing the action scenes.

Woo's breakthrough came in 1986 with *A Better Tomorrow* (*Yingxiong bense*, literally Two Colors of a Hero). Based on the Cantonese film, *The Story of a Discharged Prisoner* (*Lung Kong*, 1967), Woo crafted



13.12 Chow Yun Fat in *A Better Tomorrow* or *Yingxiong bense* (John Woo, 1986).

the narrative of two brothers each taking a different path in life. Younger brother Kit becomes a cop while his elder brother Ho leads a gang of criminals. The drama evolves as the two brothers are set against each other; Ho is being torn between loyalty to his former gang friend and to his brother. Woo contrasts the moments of happiness with stylized and smoothly choreographed violence. Friendship and childhood memories are shot in bright, soft colors. Scenes of boyish embraces, serious talks, teasing, and joking are filmed with a gracious moving camera and create a feeling of longing and nostalgia that in turn adds an undercurrent to the violence performed by the same men. *A Better Tomorrow* became an Asian blockbuster and two sequels followed. Woo made Chow Yun-fat a movie star.

After finishing *Hard Boiled* in 1992, Woo went to Hollywood, and directed *Hard Target* (1993) starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, nicknamed “The muscles from Brussels” – one of the few European martial arts actors. Other films Woo made in Hollywood included *Face/Off* (1997) starring John Travolta and *Mission Impossible II* (2000) with Tom Cruise. Then he made some less successful films, and by 2008 Woo returned to Asia to the land of his birth – mainland China where he directed *Red Cliff* (*Chi bi*, 2008) and *Red Cliff, Part II*, (*Chi bi xia: Jue zhan tian xia*, 2009).

Wong Kar-Wai was born 1958 in Shanghai, China, and moved to Hong Kong with his family at the age of five. Like Woo, he learned cinema watching films with his mother. He entered the Hong Kong film industry in 1982 writing screenplays. He made his first film in 1988: *As Tears Go By* (*Wangjiao kamen*). With *Chungking Express* (*Chongqing senlin*, 1994) he was recognized internationally for his complex use of color. He received the prize for Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for his film *Happy Together* (*Chun gwong cha sit*, 1997) a film about a gay couple. Wong Kar-Wai worked closely with the Australian cinematographer Christopher Boyle on *In the Mood for Love* (*Fa Yenug Nin Wa*, 2000), filled with stunning visual representations of unspoken desire as the man and woman repeatedly pass each other in slow motion when they go out to buy food. His films, while highly lauded at film festivals, never made enough profits to attract the attention of the Hollywood moguls.

Because Hollywood had not been as successful in breaking through national import barriers – particularly in mainland China – Asian filmmakers could become more creative than those in Europe where Hollywood continued to rule. European filmmakers needed to think of ways to compete with Hollywood, and one inspiring example arose in the tiny nation of Denmark with *Dogme 95*.



13.3 Shots from *In the Mood for Love* or *Fa yenug nin wa* (Wong Kar-Wai, 2000). Recurring scene in the film stressing the loneliness of the two main characters: the man and woman buying a meal and passing each other in slow motion.

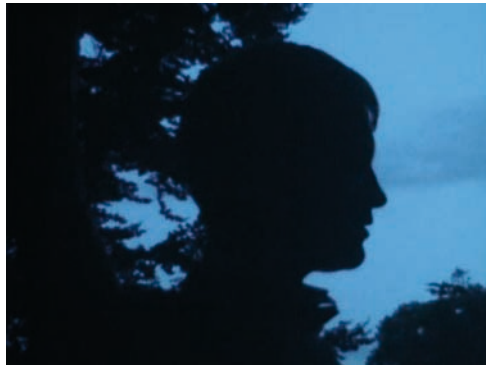
DANISH DOGME 95

In European countries of small size and a small home market, film festivals provided the opportunity for filmmakers to enter an alternative screening circuit and break away from Hollywood dominance. Film festivals introduced new talents to the world, and filmmakers could use the festivals as a platform. This happened in 1995 when the Cannes Film Festival organized a special symposium for the 100th anniversary of film. One of the invitees was the Danish director, Lars von Trier. Instead of debating the scheduled topic, Von Trier read a statement titled “Dogme 95” – written by a collective of film directors from Copenhagen who wanted to react against “certain tendencies in the cinema today.” “Dogme 95 is a rescue action!” stated the signers of the manifesto printed on red paper.

These Danish filmmakers announced “a new film order in which film was no longer an illusion.” The use of new techniques had created illusions: “By using new technologies anyone at any time can wash the last grains of truth away in the deadly embrace of sensation.” To overcome this problem and to rescue the state of cinema, Dogme 95 formulated “The Vow of Chastity” that promised a plain and simple way of filmmaking. Blessed with a great sense of theatricality, Thomas Vinterberg and Lars von Trier presented ten rules which each filmmaker should obey.

In short, Dogme 95’s rules stated that no other sources than the ones provided by natural settings should be used. Thus, they called for location shooting only. They proposed filmmakers use no props other than those belonging to the location; no extra lighting, just the natural lights (or a small lamp hung on the camera); no added music or other sound effects; no optical effects. No superficial action should take place (so no murders or weapons), and the story should be set in the present. (Temporal and geographical alienation were forbidden.) A director should not be credited. All these rules opposed everything Hollywood stood for.

When Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg presented the Dogme 95 rules there was no Dogme film made yet, nor even a single screenplay written. Only after the Danish Minister of Culture personally promised Lars von Trier \$2.8 million did von Trier start thinking of actually producing a Dogme 95 film. But the Danish Minister had circumvented the Danish official film committees and had to withdraw support. In the end,



13.14 Examples of the use of available light in *The Celebration* or *Festen* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998).

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funding was provided by Denmark's Radio Service, Scandinavian television stations, and Norwegian Film and Television. Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg wrote five synopses for Dogme 95 films. By 1998 the first two premiered at the Film Festival in Cannes: *The Celebration* (*Festen*, 1998) directed by Thomas Vinterberg and *The Idiots* (*Idioterne*, 1998) directed by von Trier. *The Celebration* won the Prix du Jury at Cannes in 1998, and would win another 24 prizes at film festivals around the world; von Trier's *The Idiots* won a critics award at the London Film Festival that same year.

Both films generated excellent publicity for Dogme 95 and soon responses poured in from all over the world. Many filmmakers wanted to take the Vow of Chastity as well. To meet the demand, the Dogme collective opened an office in 1999 to answer questions and to issue Dogme 95 certificates. Many filmmakers had no intention of strictly sticking to the rules, but were inspired by the idea of the true film and wanted to make a film in the spirit of Dogme 95. By 2004 more than 50 Dogme films had been made.



13.15 Dogme 95 Certificate.

Lars von Trier proved the important player in this minimalist moviemaking. Von Trier himself explains his obsession with rules by pointing out that no rules were applied to him in his youth. He had to set his own standards and this led to the paradox that on the one hand he was always looking for rules, and on the other hand he had a deep desire to break them. In *The Five Obstructions* (*De fem benspaend*, 2003) rules are the film's main subject. The five obstructions refer to the limitations Lars von Trier enforced on fellow Danish filmmaker Jørgen Leth who is challenged to remake his short film *The Perfect Human* (*Det perfekte menneske*, 1967).

After *The Idiots* (1998) von Trier shot *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), a musical filmed with 100 digital video cameras, all recording the same scene from a different angle. In *Dogville* (2003) and *Manderlay* (2005), von Trier once again broke Dogme 95 basic rules as he left out the setting completely. A wooden floor, on which white lines were drawn to specify the different locations, was all there was. In 2009 he directed the provocative *Antichrist* (the last "t" being spelled on the film poster as the female symbol: ♀), a film about guilt, death, and sexuality.

Dogme 95 became a conception that inspired not only filmmakers. It was parodied many times and evoked many humorous reactions. Other artists and designers, and even architects drew up their own ten rules and Vows of Chastity. Still, as the first decade of the twenty-first century was ending, Dogme 95 was inspiring and challenging filmmakers to go back to the basics of filmmaking and to get to the heart of their art. In that



13.16 *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003).

way, it became a counterforce encouraging filmmakers to define their own rules and to not conform to those of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Cinema.

FILM IN INDIA

Most people in Europe and the USA saw their first film made in India when Satyajit Ray's *Song of the Road* (*Panther Panchali*, 1955) was shown at the Cannes Film Festival and became an icon of art cinema in the West. But in India, Ray worked as an outsider; he was inspired to become a filmmaker after watching the films of Italian Neo-realism. At international film festivals, Ray's films were showered with prizes, while they were not very profitable in his native India.

It would be almost a half century later that popular Indian films made their way to a non-Indian audience in the USA and Europe. The Oscar nomination for *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001) helped to draw attention to Bollywood, a tradition of musical films made in Bombay, India.

The development of the Indian film industry was bound to the many languages of India. Hindi has been the official national language since 1947, when India became independent from the UK. But there are hundreds of other regional languages of which 22 have been recognized by the constitution of India. Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam make up two-thirds of the languages used in films. It is key to keep in mind that we cannot speak of *the* Indian film; there are many, each related to a distinct language area.

Western film historians have paid most attention to the Hindi film which made up only a fifth of the total number, but unlike films in the other languages, they were distributed nationally. Most of them are made in Mumbai (previously called Bombay) in what became called the Bollywood genre. During the 1980s the term Bollywood took on a broader meaning, as it began to be used to refer to Indian films in general. Indian film historians, however, avoid the term Bollywood and prefer to use "popular Indian film" instead.

Film production and distribution in India

Since the 1980s the sub-continent of India – which passed one billion in population in 1997 – created around 800 films in 22 languages each year. All these films find their way to the 12,000 large, small and touring (about 25 percent) cinemas. The cities are well provided with cinemas, but 75 percent of the population live in rural areas and do not have access to cinemas apart from the touring operations.

In the 1980s VCRs became widely available and attendance at theatrical shows started to fall. The rising middle class who could afford a VCR were the first to stay home and cinema-going increasingly became a leisure activity for the lower classes. Still, unlike Europe, Indian films held a 93 percent share of the total number of local screenings. Hollywood always was a very minor player in India because the national government protected native production. Until 1997 every imported film was censored and had to be approved of by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). After 1997, importation into India was only allowed for films that had either won a prize at or were part of an official program of a film festival acknowledged by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting or the Government of India, or had had positive reviews in one of the approved prestigious film journals. Examples of the authorized festivals were the Berlin International Film Festival, Festival International du Film Cannes, San Francisco Film Festival USA, and the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Apart from Mumbai, long home to Bollywood, there were four large film production locations in the south: Chennai (former Madras, producing Tamil language films), Hyderabad (Telugu), Bengaluru (former Bangalore,

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Dravidian languages), and Tiruvananthapuram (Malayalam). Unlike Hollywood, studios and producers are not part of the same company in India. And larger production companies did not own theaters. There were numerous small production companies, often started by actors or directors; most of them are family businesses.

The Chopra family provides an example of a longtime family operation. Yash Chopra (born 1932) started as a director and worked for his brothers' company BR Films. In 1973, he launched his own production company called Yashrai Films but continued to work as a director as well. The family line was continued when his eldest son Aditya became a director as well, first assisting his father on *The Brave Heart Will Take the Bride* (*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, 1995), which became a megahit at the box-office. Uday Chopra, the youngest son, also joined the family business and worked as a producer and assistant director, actor and then writer. Other very popular titles of the Chopra family were *The New Age* (*Naya Daur*, B. R. Chopra, 1957), *Time* (*Waqt*, B. R. Chopra, 1965), *Wall* (*Deewaar*, Yash Chopra, 1975), *Chandni* (Yash Chopra, 1989), and *Fear* (*Darr*, Yash Chopra, 1993).



13.17 *The Brave Heart Will Take the Bride* or *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (Aditya Chopra, 1995). Emotional climax of the film. Just before her arranged wedding will take place Simran (Kajol) is allowed to marry her true love Raj (Shahrukh Kahn).

Because of its many different languages, India's film distribution has long been divided into five territories: (1) Mumbai, (2) Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and East Punjab, (3) Central Province, Central India, and Rajasthan, (4) Eastern region, and (5) the Southern region. A sixth territory has been foreign markets. A movie in one of the minority languages was most of the time only distributed regionally while a Hindi language film was sold to several regions. As a result of the fragmented market, as of 2010 there existed only one national distributor, the Rajshri Group. All other distributors only cover a specific territory.

The introduction of satellite television in 1992 offered a new means of distribution into rural India. Film producers could also sell TV distribution rights. Television was used to market and advertise new films. Soorja Barjatya proved a pioneer in a different use of advertising films on TV. Instead of showing entire songs of the film on television, he developed a "making of" program that showed short parts of the film and the songs. Others followed and started to produce "making of" television programs as well.

The music industry offered another important partner in financing; film music is the backbone of India's music industry. Until the early 1980s film music was the only kind of popular music and even with satellite TV still offered the bulk of music that charted in India. Not surprisingly the music rights are sold at a high price and can cover one-fourth of a film's production costs. The songs of the film are used as a marketing tool; the more popular the songs, the more audiences wanted to see how they looked on the big screen. Clips from the songs are screened on television, issued on audiocassettes and CDs, and more recently promoted on the internet – all about two months before the actual premiere of the film.

Government support of Indian art cinema

The Indian government supported Indian film but preferred (social) art-cinema movies. In 1960, the central government of India established the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) to support art cinema and export films such as those of Satyajit Ray. In 1980 the FFC merged into the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), a public body that (co-)financed films and directors that were considered of “high quality.” By 1985, the Indian government had set up programs on the national television channel to broadcast “high quality” Indian films, thus subsidizing many non-popular film directors. The NFDC stated that they funded social films “depicting a thought provoking story about social ills, such as illiteracy, superstition, sati, child marriage, terrorism, child labor, women’s empowerment, bonded labor and films on national leaders.” In its first 25 years the NFDC co-produced more than 200 films in 15 languages.

These social films were referred to as “art cinema,” and “The New Indian Cinema.” One cannot speak, however, of a theoretically grounded movement with a specific style. The only common denominator was the absence of the songs and dances of the “popular films,” the realist settings and the attention to social themes. These characteristics traced back to Satyajit Ray’s Apu trilogy: *Song of the Road* (*Pather Panchali*, 1955), *The Unvanquished* (*Aparajito*, 1956), and *The World of Apu* (*Apu Sansar*, 1959). The Apu trilogy is characterized by realism, with the mise-en-scène often photographed in deep space, and through long takes (in time) and slow deliberate camera movements. *Song of the Road* achieved great acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival in 1956. Ray was one of the first filmmakers who benefitted from governmental support. Throughout his career, he was put forward as the icon of Indian quality film. In the 1980s for example Ray was asked by the Indian government to write a series called *Satyajit Ray Presents* (1986 and 1987) for national television, directed by his son Sandip Ray. A couple of weeks before his death in 1992, Satyajit Ray was awarded an Honorary Lifetime Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

A key moment in the development of Indian art cinema was the release of Mrinal Sen’s *Mr. Shome* (*Bhuvan Shome*) in 1969. *Mr. Shome*, financed by the Indian government, won the Golden Lotus (an Indian government award) for best film and best direction. In this humorous film, a stiff bureaucrat learns to understand the people he is controlling and in the process becomes a more humane person. A couple of



13.18 Example of the realist settings in *Song of the Road* or *Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray, 1955).

years later came Shyam Benegal's *The Seedling* (*Ankur*, 1974) with a narrative of a married woman who is seduced by her rich employer. She curses the caste system when she – while being the victim – is the one that gets punished for the offences of the employer. *The Seedling* won three national film awards and 43 other film festival prizes around the world.

In the 1980s some new cinema directors started to incorporate a few songs into their films, thus narrowing the gap between the art film and the mainstream film. Filmmaker Ketan Mehta wove three songs in his film *A Touch of Spice* (*Mirch Masala*, 1985). The film became famous for its beautiful use of color. Many scenes were shot in a red chili factory, the shelter of the main female character who has fled from abduction by the village head. Ketan Mehta's films always commented on society as he believed it is a filmmakers' responsibility to do so. For example, his *Colours of Passion* (*Rang Rasiya*, 2008) pleads for the freedom of expression.

The film is a biopic about the nineteenth-century Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma, and tells about his struggle to pursue a career as a painter. In the end he becomes the father of Modern Indian painting. *Colours of Passion* featured five songs and, like the mainstream popular productions, offered a website for marketing purposes. Ketan Mehta, however, was an exception; most serious Indian art-cinema filmmakers stayed away from using song and dance, and thus only reached small audiences in their native land.

Characteristics of the popular Indian film

The most noticeable characteristic of the popular mainstream Indian film is the use of music, song, and dance. Whether a film is a (historical) drama, a comedy, a mythological story, a thriller, or a mystery, at least five to seven songs are integrated. The use of song and dance traces back to the Indian theater tradition.

Song and dance provided the means to introduce the main characters. The entrance of the male hero for example was supposed to be very spectacular and in a song his good qualities were spelled out. The same was done when the heroine made her first appearance. This still happens in many Indian films. A beautiful example is found in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Straight From the Heart* (*Hum Dil De Chuke Sanan*, 1999) when Nandini, the apple of her father's eye, is introduced. While we see her – often in slow motion – graciously running around, and playing games, the chorus praises her for being “a wonder of nature” (...) “the sight of you sets off storm and lightning, you are incomparable, oh fair virgin.” At the same time the song preludes what is coming: (...) “like a raging fire is your passionate youth.”

A second function of the songs is to express the state of mind of the main characters. A love they are unable to express, the longing for each other, and missing each other, come in song. So do their fears and desires. In the thriller Yash Chopra's *Fear*



13.19 *Straight From the Heart* or *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanan* (Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 1999). The introduction of Nandini (Aishwarya Rai) in a song: “You are a wonder of nature” (2); “You have all hearts” (3).

(Darr, 1993) the music and the songs are ingeniously woven into the story and some of them are used to create tension, mystery, and anxiety. A secretive man, obsessed with the heroine of the film, is introduced through music without being shown. Like the woman in the story, we the audience do not see him. In the story, she mistakes the invisible man for her fiancé and slowly discovers she is being hunted by a disturbed man.

To create opportunities for singing and dancing, traditional family parties – an engagement party, a marriage, or one of the numerous Indian feasts like the popular *holi* (feast of color) – are made part of the narrative. Another way of doing this is to give the main characters a profession in which they sing and dance. In *Straight From the Heart*, for example, the father of the heroine is a famous singer and she falls in love with a young Italian student who is taking lessons with her father.

The songs are never sung by the actors/actresses themselves but by specially trained singers. The singers are chosen per song – the timbre of the voice and the way of singing should fit perfectly with the song – so it is a convention that an actor “sings” different songs in different voices. The “playback” singers are as much celebrities as the actors and are important to the mass appeal of the film.

Most popular Indian films have a melodramatic plot always ending with the triumph of love and filled with improbable twists. An important theme is the relation between the individual and its family. So, in many romantic narrative films the girl is torn between family obligations and her love for the wrong man. A second recurring theme is the honest character who suffers because of injustice, a misunderstanding, or a doomed love affair. For example, in Manmohan Desai’s *Destiny* (*Naseeb*, 1981) a faithful waiter (played by the famous actor Amitabh Bachchan) renounces his beloved when he finds out that his best friend is slowly drinking himself to death because he loves the very same woman. Of course in the end, each gets the right woman. As in almost all Indian film stories, loyalty, honor, and self denial are deemed positive traits and are expected to be rewarded in the end.

During the 1970s and 1980s, action and revenge dramas also became popular. Some historians explain this popularity by the economic crisis that hit India in the 1970s. The gap between the rich and the poor widened and a growing number of the very poor populated the slums of the big cities. Dissatisfaction with the social circumstances was reflected in many films. This new main character is referred to as an *Angry Young Man* and revolts against injustice done to persons, or families. In Ramesh Sippy’s *Flames* (*Sholay*, 1975) the hero even dies while restoring peace in a village battered by violent attacks of a lawless gang.

Amitabh Bachchan became a celebrated performer of these kinds of roles. In 1973 he played an *Angry Young Man* for the first time in *Chain* (*Zanjeer*, Prakash Mehra, 1973). As a policeman he is obsessed with finding the truth but in order to do justice he breaks the law. This new kind of hero had a hard side and could be very cynical. There was a lack of trust in the government and society in general. The state was most of the time portrayed as inefficient, unjust, and incompetent at solving social problems like poverty and unemployment. This time the officials were the bad guys.

Holi is an Hindu spring festival celebrated in northern India. People shower each other with colored water and throw colored powder on one another.

Angry Young Man is a label derived from British literature and films that during the 1960s expressed disillusionment with society.



13.20 Feast of colors with Amitabh Bachchan in *Flames* or *Sholay* (Ramesh Sippy, 1975).

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In *Flames* Amitabh Bachchan is doing justice in a different way. He is hired by an ex policeman who wants to avenge the death of his wife and children. *Flames* is an emotional roller coaster and alternates light-hearted and humorous moments with horrific episodes as when at the height of the festival of colors the village is brutally attacked. *Flames* became one of the biggest hits in Indian film history. It ran for five years consecutively in one theater in Mumbai – which has a population greater than New York City. Other films of this genre with Amitabh Bachchan are *The Wall* (*Deewar*, Yash Chopra, 1975) and *Coolie* (Manmohan Desai, 1983).

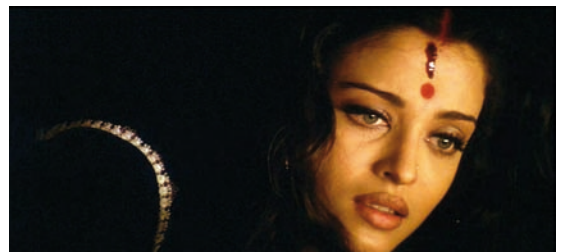
Director-producers of India

Manmohan Desai (1936–1996) was known as one of India's most successful film directors and producers, affectionately called the “Miracle Man of Bollywood” by the late 1970s. On one occasion, in 1977, three of his popular movies were released over a 52-day span, and all of them became runaway successes. With his popular stories, saucy song and dance routines, and convoluted plots, he established the career of Amitabh Bachchan, then India's most popular actor.

Desai was born in Bombay as the son of a moderately well-known producer and director of popular stunt films. In 1960, at the age of 23, Desai made his directorial debut with *Trickster* (*Chhalia*) which proved moderately successful at the box-office. He spent the rest of the 1960s looking for a breakthrough hit and that came in 1970 with *The Deceiver* (*Sucha Jootha*), a thriller with popular music which effectively used a double-role routine with Rajesh Khanna playing the main parts. This was followed by other hits in quick succession. By the late 1970s, Desai was praised as Bollywood's “head showman.”

In 1989, however, he retreated into the background, making way for his son. Desai was often criticized for his absurd themes and story lines – blind people in his films suddenly regain sight and twins separated at birth are reunited under bizarre circumstances – but he never sought to justify the nature of his work, saying he made movies to help people forget their tensions and worries. If any of his films carried a social message, it was incidental.

Raj Kapoor (1924–1988) started as an actor who grew so popular he started his own production company. He played a young man who, with his lover, rebelled against their disapproving, traditional parents. These films did not always have a happy ending as, for example, the title *From Catastrophe to Catastrophe* (*Qayamat se*



13.21 *Devdas* (Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002). Devdas (Shahrukh Khan) is dying of a broken heart (1); although Paro (Aishwarya Rai) is married to someone else she is still spiritually connected with Devdas. Notice the drop of blood on her forehead announcing the death of Devdas; the dead body of Devdas – Paro never got to him (3).

Qayamat Tak, Mansoor Khan, 1988) suggesting a “Romeo and Juliet” tragedy where true love can only exist in the afterlife.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali (born 1963) graduated from the Film and Television Institute of India. His first film was *Khamosi: The Musical* (1996). His second film *Straight From the Heart* fits in the popular 1990s trend of romantic films with a humorous subplot, revolving around the eternal triangle in which a woman has to choose between the man she loves (or she believes she loves) and the man whom she is married off to. *Straight From the Heart* won 26 prizes and was a huge hit at the box-office.

With *Devdas* (2002) he achieved even more. This heartbreaking story of an unfulfilled eternal love has been told many times before in Indian film history. *Devdas* was the most expensive Indian film in history and it was the first Indian film that premièred at the Cannes Film Festival.

Karan Johar (born 1963), son of Yash Johar, the founder of Dharma Productions, started his career writing the script for Aditya Chopra’s *The Brave Heart Will Take the Bride* (*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, 1995) and debuted at the age of 25 with *Something is Happening* (*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, 1998) which was an instant success. His next film *Sometimes Happiness and Sometimes Sorrow* (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, 2001) did even better. Karan Johar also worked as host for the celebrity TV show *Koffee with Karan* (2004–2006). He is also involved in world politics and was chosen as one of 250 Global Young Leaders by the World Economic Forum in 2006 to discuss the way economic power should be divided in the new world order.

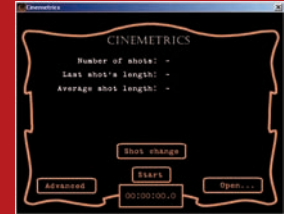
THE FUTURE

Indian film is currently still thriving, and its future looks bright – as is filmmaking in China, Hong Kong, and Denmark. All these nations had governmental subsidy efforts to maintain a cinematic culture in the national identity. Why? The threat of Hollywood dominating their national culture remains real. Thus while many have predicted the end of Hollywood because of television, Hollywood continued to thrive both in the USA and other nations. The Hollywood studios have shown over and over again that they can adapt to new circumstances. The global success of *Avatar* (2009) – which raised two-thirds of its revenues from countries outside the USA – illustrates this. In the next and final chapter we will analyze how Hollywood managed to retain its power.

CASE STUDY 13

HISTORICAL FILM RESEARCH IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Digital media enables Internet users to access many new possibilities for searching, generating, and presenting information. Almost all libraries and archives now have an online search engine and often even archival inventories can be accessed through a website. This saves a lot of time and helps movie historians understand collections and prepare their visits for research purposes.



13.22 Cinemetrics Tool.

More and more historical sources are being digitalized and put on line. Newspapers like *The New York Times* have made their archives available and searchable for the online user. All articles from 1851 on can be searched digitally. One search term and a few mouse clicks replace the tedious task of leafing through every newspaper to find incidental events like a fund raising show of Lumière films at St Valentine's Kettledrum in 1897.

In addition, projects like the digitalization of censorship documents from the German Film Institute (Deutsches Film Institute) are of great value for film historians. Contested censorship decisions inform us about morals and opinions of that time. For example, one report describes which segments of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Godless Girl* (1928) aroused indignation amongst authorities.

Apart from the online gathering of information, the presentation of research results online has become increasingly important. Film historians from around the world have put data they collected on websites and made them accessible for other users. In the USA, for example, two projects have been developed to map (local) cinema culture: *Going to the Show* (containing information on movie theaters of the state of North Carolina) and *The Williamsburg Theater Project* (containing information on all the movies shown in Williamsburg, Virginia – a small town of 12,500).

In Europe similar projects have been created like the *Cinema Context Collection*, containing information on film distribution and exhibition in the Netherlands from 1895 until the present day, and the *London Project*, a database of early cinemas and film businesses in London from 1894 until 1914.

Except for the *London Project*, which only holds information on the businesses, these databases contain information on which film was shown when and where. Depending on the elaborateness of the dataset, more information can be found on the exhibitors, distributors, the venues where films were shown and their contexts, and the films.

A different kind of online dataset can be found in *Cinemetrics*, a site devoted to the “measurement of films.” It collects and generates data on the average shot lengths and shot scale of films and offers a computer program to download to measure other films. For decades scholars of poetry have counted syllables; film histories look for changes in average shot length. Results from the films that have been analyzed with the measurement program Cinemetrics provides are automatically added to the online dataset. Thus, the website facilitates the comparing of one's findings with those of others.

The development of online databases makes it possible for researchers of small scale individual projects (movie-going in a certain town, the film programming of a specific cinema, or the analysis of one film) to put their results in a broader perspective and to place their findings in the context of broader historical research. All this is best done through cooperation, as a single person will find it difficult to maintain a continuous website alone.

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The Cinema Context Collection: <http://www.cinemacontext.nl/>

Cinematics: <http://www.cinematics.lv/>



CHAPTER 14

HOLLYWOOD THRIVES

Introduction

The major studios

The new means of presentation – Home video

Independent movies

The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style continues

The future

Case study 14: The reception of James Cameron's Avatar

INTRODUCTION

This is a chapter on the contemporary history of Hollywood that began in 1975 with two significant events: the initiation of the blockbuster era and the introduction of the home video. Universal's *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) proved that a single film could generate revenues in the billions of dollars. With Sony's first home video system fans no longer needed to go to a cinema to see a movie, but could watch motion pictures at home on their television sets.

The home video system did change audiences' viewing habits but in the end did not harm Hollywood's profitability. Theatrical premières (in the cinemas) simply represented the mass introduction of new movies to the public, but the main revenue came from video tape sales. In the 1990s these tapes were replaced by **digital video discs (DVDs)**.

DVD

Also known as "Digital Versatile Disc" or "Digital Video Disc." An optical digital storage of a movie. DVDs are of the same dimensions as compact discs (CDs), but by use of "compressed digital information" stored more than six times as much data as a music CD.

In 2000 Blu-ray technology added a brighter image. In addition, movies from Hollywood are constantly being shown around the world on television delivered by cable TV, satellite TV, and onto individual computers. Movie watching expanded to unprecedented commitments of time; at least three movies are watched per week on average in the USA – usually on a television set.

While Hollywood studios rely on blockbusters to win mass audiences, in the 1990s they also sought to fulfill different tastes with "**independent movies**" that did not always follow the tenets of Classical Hollywood Narrative norms. Plots would be purposely mixed up, tales of ultra-violent action became normal, and speeding up the narrative made the movie story seem faster. But the culture and economics of Hollywood still revolves around the Classical Hollywood narrative blockbuster. As 2010 began a spectacular science fiction film using the latest digital techniques – *Avatar* – shattered all box-office records for theatrical success.

By 2010 the Hollywood studio system is made up of six dominant corporations: Universal, Disney, Paramount, Sony, Warner Bros., and Twentieth Century-Fox. While Hollywood produces fewer and fewer of the total feature films made around the world, its six companies continue to dominate.

Whenever one sees a movie blockbuster – in a movie theater, or at home on a DVD – an examination of the final credits reveals the continuing economic power of the Hollywood studios. George Lucas alone cannot distribute his films; he needs Rupert Murdoch's Twentieth Century-Fox, one of Hollywood's six major studios. Lucas' only other choices to have his movie seen around the whole world would be another one of the major Hollywood studios. Even Steven Spielberg failed to mount a successful challenge to the six major studios when he and two partners in 1994 started DreamWorks SKG, and within a decade failed so badly that he and his partners sold DreamWorks to one of the six major studios – Paramount.

THE MAJOR STUDIOS

In 2010 only Hollywood's major studios can guarantee movie makers worldwide distribution – first in theaters, then on home video, and then on cable television. No other film corporations can offer a movie maker such a potentially vast audience. Only brave independents would risk going it alone.

Also called "Indie films". The term "independent" is used widely and variably; here it is defined as films not released by a major studio's mainstream division.

UNIVERSAL started the new era in June 1975 with *Jaws*. Indeed the age of the new Hollywood conglomerate corporation began with key innovations by the movie mogul in charge of Universal – Lew Wasserman. As he re-invented Universal, Wasserman expanded the definition of “movie studio” to also include television production. Finally to counter Southern California’s most popular amusement park – Disneyland – Universal City studio organized tours for visitors to Los Angeles. Wasserman also built a film library to facilitate new presentations of the films after the theatrical première date. (In the film industry these are known as **windows**.)



14.1 Universal logo.

Through the 1980s, Wasserman fashioned a mighty media production studio factory and moved the final decision-making from the New York office (as it had been throughout the 1960s) to Los Angeles studio lots. He sold *Jaws* through constant TV advertising and by June 1975 its multi-million grosses each week created its own publicity blitz. The Wasserman-led Universal studio money-making machine reached its climax with *E.T.* in 1982, which grossed \$1 billion worldwide, thereby setting the record as the most successful movie of all-time. By 1982 Universal – Lew Wasserman’s creation – stood atop a renewed Hollywood movie business.

But in 1990 as he grew older and with Japanese corporations investing in the USA, Wasserman sold Universal to Matsushita of Japan, Sony’s rival in home electronics (then video tape players). Wasserman expected to continue running Universal as Matsushita sold VCRs but the Japanese managers eased Wasserman out, and soon sold the company.



14.2 Lew Wasserman, around the time that *Jaws* was released, c.1975.

Windows are time frames during which films could be viewed in theaters, on disc, over subscription cable channels, or via video on demand by cable or satellite delivered TV.

Universal went through a difficult time in the 1990s as it had to deal with ownership transference and a change of strategies. Besides that box-office hits failed to occur. Between 1996 and 2008 Universal only led the USA box-office take in 2000 with *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (Ron Howard, 2000). Universal moved from the most successful studio in 1981 to the least successful studio in Hollywood in 2001.

Thus, on 3 December 2009, Comcast, the largest provider of home cable TV in the USA and also the largest Internet service provider, announced that it would purchase 51 percent of General Electric’s share of NBC-Universal for \$37 billion. In 2004, Comcast had tried to buy Disney, but failed. Comcast sought to harness digital distribution of movies to create a new business model. That is, Comcast planned to make movies and then distribute them – after their theatrical premières – by way of various types of cable offerings, by individual film (video on demand), and by packages of films (on cable channels like HBO). Comcast planned to experiment with new means of distribution where its media conglomerate rivals had

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failed. This seems to be going against the Hollywood trend since earlier in 2009 Time Warner had sold off its cable TV properties and Internet company AOL. Movie historians noted the fabled changes that were promised in 2000 when AOL, then the largest Internet Service Provider, merged with Warner; just a decade later this planned and anticipated synergy failed to make Internet television work as an additional apparatus to a TV set and an Internet link were required.

As Comcast took over Universal Studios the discussions centered on new distribution “windows.” As DVD sales fell during the **Great Recession of 2008–2010**, and as cable TV viewing increased, selling films on per view on cable TV became the only growth area in Hollywood’s movie income stream.

Universal is becoming a laboratory to test a reformulation of the Hollywood movie industry’s approach to its own customers. Universal’s 4,000 films offer a lot of potential for this move into digital distribution but when the deal was announced in December 2009, no specifics were announced. Here is where the historical distance that “contemporary history” lacks means movie historians can only guess how Universal – owned by Comcast – will act.



14.3 Miramax logo.

DISNEY in 1975 still missed its dead founder, Walt Disney, who died in 1966. The Disney Corporation was then run by Walt’s son-in-law and almost dropped out as a major Hollywood studio during the early 1980s. The desperate Disney family brought in outsiders to save the studio, and hired Michael Eisner from Paramount. Thereafter for two decades – 1984–2004 – Eisner took the principles of Universal’s Lew Wasserman and crafted a highly profitable studio. Like Wasserman, Michael Eisner micro-managed all Disney corporate decisions. Whether under the brand of mainstream Hollywood Pictures, or Touchstone Pictures, or later specialized “independent” fare from its Miramax division, Eisner led Disney to major studio success during the 1990s.

Hits poured out. Three years after Eisner took charge Disney released *Three Men and a Baby* (Leonard Nimoy, 1987) – its first blockbuster (going beyond the \$100 million in box-office take in the USA.) *Three Men and a Baby* represented a quintessential Eisner touch – drawing its stars, Ted Danson and Tom Sellick, from the world of television, and keeping its production budget well below the industry average.



14.4 Michael Eisner, CEO of Disney, 1984–2005.

This economic downturn started in the fall of 2008 with the collapse of the housing market in the USA which in turn caused the near bankruptcy of the banking system. Then the financial crisis spread through the world. In 2010 it continues with no end in sight.

Then Eisner pushed to pioneer serious exploitation of home video. At first Disney simply re-packaged animation classics from the past on video-cassettes and then DVDs, generating millions of dollars in studio profits. Indeed, a new era for home video commenced in 1987 when *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) generated more than \$2 million in orders – even before a single copy was ever shipped. Eisner started selling past Disney hits *Bambi* (1942) and *Fantasia* (1940). Starting with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, Eisner approved new animated features: *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), and *Pocahontas* (1995). In 1993, for instance, *Aladdin* sold 10.6 million copies in the first three days after its release, en route to an astonishing 24 million sold, a record at the time. In 1994 Disney did it again with a re-issue of the classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1938), which surpassed *Aladdin* and generated \$300 million in home video revenues, a significant boost to growing corporate profitability. This success and new profits pushed Eisner to make more and more deals and alliances. For example, in late February 1997 he announced a 10-movie deal with Pixar, joint producer of *Toy Story* (1995). By 1997 stockholders were so satisfied that they voted Eisner a new contract.

But as he re-built Disney, Michael Eisner made enemies. For example, in 1994 he passed over assistant Jeffrey Katzenberg, and so Katzenberg left to help start DreamWorks SKG, and the Disney Animation unit suffered. Also starting in 2000, Disney's overall profits began to decline. As success declined – replaced by complaints by Disney stockholders – Eisner's support from Disney stockholders disappeared. Eisner owned only 1 percent of the total Disney shares of stock; members of the Disney family owned more than one-third of all shares. On 3 March 2004, at Disney's annual shareholders' meeting, a surprising and unprecedented 43 percent of Disney's shareholders, predominantly rallied by Walt's nephew Roy Disney, failed to re-elect Michael Eisner to Disney's board. A struggle ensued and, on 13 March 2005, Eisner announced that he would step down as CEO – one year before his contract was due to expire.



14.5 Robert Iger, head of Disney.

The best that his successor – Robert Iger – could do was muddle through. He gave up on Disney's independent division Miramax and went with Pixar for its blockbusters. Features like *Extract* (Mike Judge, 2009), and *Adventureland* (Greg Mottola, 2009) were virtually ignored by audiences and added nothing to the studio's profits. So in 2009, Iger selected Rich Ross, president of Disney Channels Worldwide, to turn around the movie studio – starting during the Great Recession of 2008–2010.



14.6 Paramount logo.

PARAMOUNT did well in the 1970s and then sank under CEO Martin Davis during the 1980s. In 1993, Sumner Redstone, owner of media conglomerate Viacom, brought Paramount into his corporate colossus.

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And Redstone – as owner of Viacom – has run the Paramount studio since 1993. Unlike the other five major studios, Sumner Redstone still held a majority of the stock in Viacom and used this ownership power to make all key decisions at Paramount. Since 1993, Redstone has sought to meld Paramount into a vast diversified corporate empire which included TV networks such as CBS, MTV, The Movie Channel, and Showtime. Indeed, as a former movie exhibitor, Redstone saw Paramount as making movies that would then be shown exclusively on Showtime and The Movie Channel pay-cable TV networks.



14.7 Paramount backlot. Named for backlot creator of *Star Trek*, Gene Roddenberry.

The trade paper *Variety* properly called Redstone “the vicar of Viacom” because he did not have to answer to other stockholders. In practice, Redstone played a cautious movie mogul. So, for example, it was not until 1998 that Redstone launched a classics division of Paramount to do battle with Disney’s Miramax, and the small profitable Indie films of Fox’s Searchlight, and Sony’s classics division. Redstone was the final mogul of the “Big Six” to start an “independent” unit, as explained later in this chapter.

Overall, during the late 1990s, Paramount's box-office take had stagnated. Redstone systematically demanded all expensive projects have financial partners, and so lost out on many "hot" properties. According to the second-guessers, Paramount should have owned all rights to hits like *Face/Off* (John Woo, 1997), instead of settling for half the action. The studio had even developed the 1998 hit *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998), but nonetheless ended up splitting the deal with DreamWorks SKG. The rationale for this policy, as implemented by Paramount studio head Sherry Lansing under orders from Sumner Redstone, was to minimize risk. Indeed many industry observers were shocked when Redstone agreed to help Twentieth Century-Fox finance the ever growing expenses of Fox's production of *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997). But Redstone drove a safe bargain and, for his "end money," received exclusive rights for distribution in the USA and Canada while Rupert Murdoch held onto rights for the rest of the world.



14.8 Sumner Redstone, owner and operator of Paramount, part of Viacom.

On 1 December 2005, Redstone purchased DreamWorks for \$1.6 billion. Redstone so wanted the new infusion of production talent that he was willing to take on \$400 million of DreamWorks' debt. For Paramount, the move was a logical one. Brad Grey, who Redstone had recently put in charge of the Paramount studio, picked up the Steven Spielberg blockbuster *War of the Worlds* (2005). Thereafter Paramount produced two blockbusters with its DreamWorks' division – *Shrek the Third* (2007) and *Transformers* (2007).

By the end of 2009 Redstone has Paramount at long last catching a moment in the sun. Revenue is up sharply with the DVDs of three summer 2009 hits – *Star Trek* (J. J. Abrams, 2009), *G. I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (Stephen Sommers, 2009), and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (Michael Bay, 2009), the sequel to the 2007 hit. In a rare Indie move, Redstone took a chance on *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007), made for \$15,000 and marketed on the cheap, but took in \$107 million at the box-office after opening in late September 2009. Paramount was doing so well in the Great Recession that Redstone ordered job cuts stopped – though not before about a third of the 3,000 employees there when he arrived had been pushed out. He boasted in the financial press that he was proud to have whittled Paramount's release schedule to what he believed will be a profitable core of about 16 films a year. By the close of 2009, Paramount is running second only to Warner Bros. in the box-office race.

SONY ENTERTAINMENT and its studio had its origins in Columbia Pictures. That studio had struggled in the late 1970s and so in 1982 Columbia stockholders sold the studio to the ultimate consumer corporation – Coca-Cola. The Atlanta based soft-drink company began an experiment to turn a Hollywood company into an efficient business enterprise. The Atlanta MBA's studio boss Frank Price produced a mixed bag, with hits like *The Karate Kid* (John G. Avildsen, 1984) and *Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984) – but also with many costly flops including *Sweet Dreams* (Karel Reisz, 1985), *Leonard Part 6* (Paul Weiland, 1987), and *Ishtar* (Elaine May, 1987). Atlanta thus began to regularize the costs and allied with Time Inc.'s HBO

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pay-TV operation and CBS to form a feeder for TV presentation called Tri-Star Pictures.

In 1986, the Atlanta executives of Coca-Cola recruited British producer David Puttnam to head the studio. He created no hits. Dawn Steel, as his successor, did no better and so in 1989 Coca-Cola – failing to harness Hollywood – sold out to Japan's Sony. Given that Coca-Cola's MBA managers could make no progress in Hollywood, most knowledgeable "experts" at the time figured that Sony would not either. Still, Sony tried.

On 28 September 1989, Sony took control of what was still called Columbia Pictures for \$3.4 billion. The next day, Sony hired Peter Guber and Jon Peters to run the studio. In 1991, Sony purchased the old MGM studio, and spent \$100 million updating the aging facility. Sony painted and upgraded the buildings, many of which still bore the names of MGM stars such as Clark Gable and Judy Garland. Sony then added art deco touches and hand-painted murals of old and new Columbia movies, and settled in.

Sony had acquired not only an ongoing studio, but an extensive library of nearly 3,000 movies. Revenues from this massive library stabilized the studio with sales of home video. Sony focused on creating potential blockbusters and by 1997 this was led by *Men in Black* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997), *Air Force One* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1997), and *My Best Friend's Wedding* (P. J. Hogan, 1997). But like all Hollywood major studios, the new management of Sony had its failures – most notably *Godzilla* (Roland Emmerich, 1998), which had every possible merchandising tie-in and a record TV advertising budget, yet still could not bring fans into theaters after the first couple of weekends.

By May 1997 Howard Stringer was running all Sony USA operations including the studio. Stringer played it safe and approved Stan Lee comic book inspired epics like *Spider-Man* (Sam Raimi, 2002) and *Spider-Man 2* (Sam Raimi, 2004). Both became blockbusters. The original *Spider-Man* cost \$140 million, but grossed double that in world-wide revenues. *Spider-Man* ranked as 2002's third-highest-grossing film, and jumped to the 21st-highest-grossing film of all time. The film's success has led to successful sequels, *Spider-Man 2* (2004), and *Spider-Man 3* (Sam Raimi, 2007). Principal filming took place in Sony's Stages 29 and 27 – two of the largest indoor studio buildings in the world. Despite predictions made in 1989, Sony thrives.

WARNER BROS. began the twenty-first century as a small part of the biggest merger experiment of the decade. In 2000 Time Warner, parent



14.9 Columbia logo.



14.10 Howard Stringer, head of Sony.



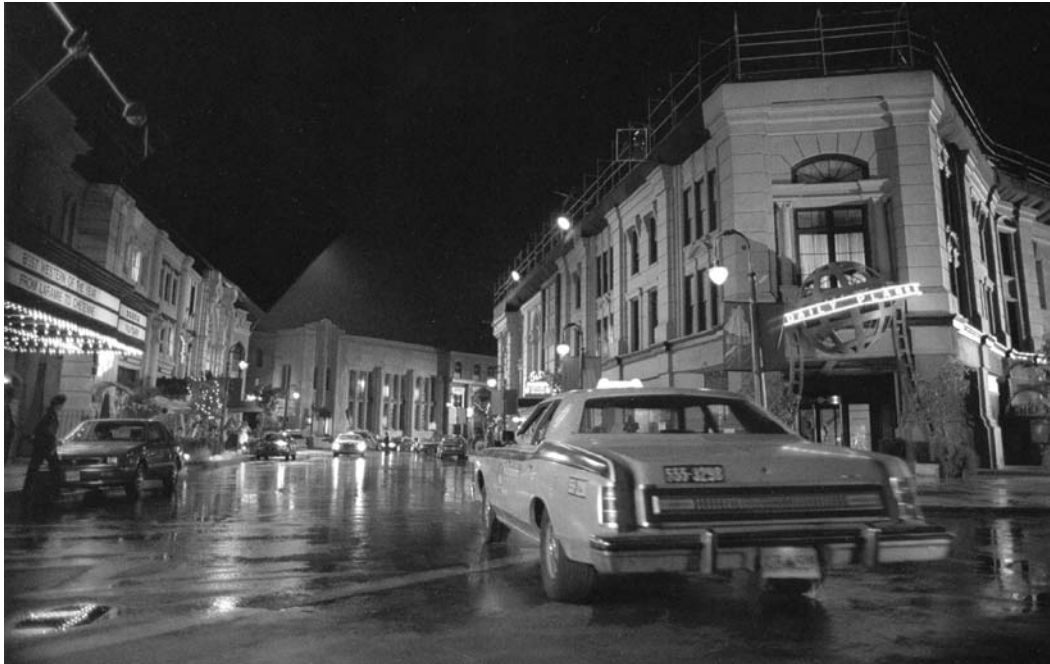
14.11 Warner Bros. logo.

company of Warner Bros., took over Internet provider America Online (AOL) and sought to create a new form of movie viewing over the World Wide Web. That alliance with AOL failed. On the other hand, Warners' business strategy had worked in the 1970s with its pioneering of cable TV's Home Box Office.

Robert Daly and Terry Semel were the best executives of the Hollywood studios of the 1980s and 1990s. They joined Warners on 1 December 1980 and ruled the Warners backlot and distribution for 20 years as Chairman of the Board and Co-Chief Executive Officer. By 1995, they were on such a roll that on 16 November, Daly and Semel added the Warner Music Group to their responsibilities. But they spread themselves too thin and were gone by the time Time Warner turned towards AOL. During the Daly/Semel era at Warner Bros., the motion pictures they are credited with garnered 13 Best Picture Oscar nominations, three of which were winners: *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Driving Miss Daisy* (Bruce Beresford, 1989), and *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992). Their franchise blockbuster was the *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989 and 1992; Joel Schumacher, 1995 and 1997) series – which then continued with a new Batman movie with *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005) and *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008).



14.12 Robert Daly, long time head of Warner Bros.



14.13 Warner Bros. backlot in Burbank, California, 1993.

What kept Time Warner going was its reliance on two successful blockbuster franchises – *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001, 2002, and 2003) and the *Harry Potter* series (Chris Columbus, 2001 and 2002;

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Alfonso Cuarón, 2004; Mike Newell, 2005; David Yates, 2007 and 2009). Both drew staggering revenues and glossed over the many duds that Warner Bros. created. While its failed merger with AOL drew all the headlines, Warner Bros. as a movie studio knew that generating large profits in the long run for its parent company Time Warner could (and would) provide a stable financial base for the conglomerate.



14.14 Twentieth Century Fox logo.

In short, Warner Bros. is the most profitable studio. Yet the studio – with Richard Parsons as CEO of Time Warner – does make mistakes – the most glaring of which was *The Adventures of Pluto Nash* (Ron Underwood, 2002) starring Eddie Murphy which cost in excess of \$100 million and grossed at the box-office of USA and Canada a paltry \$7 million. In fact, all major studios had to cope with major losers but as long as the blockbuster hits cover the losses the studios continue to make profits.

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX came to define the new Hollywood when in 1986 Australian Rupert Murdoch purchased the company to become part of his international media empire, News Corporation. Unlike Sumner Redstone, Murdoch did not have full control of the Fox studio, although he held enough shares to dominate. Another difference: Murdoch was and is a risk taker. No better examples illustrate this point than Fox's massive investments in *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) and *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009). But in 1986 Rupert Murdoch – then more famous for his new TV network in the USA, called FOX – also depended on *Star Wars* sequels (1999, 2002 and 2005) by George Lucas to succeed.



14.15 Rupert Murdoch, head of Fox.

There have been many blockbusters since the mid-1970s, but none out-grossed Fox's familiar story of the sinking of the great steamship *Titanic* that has been filmed numerous times. *Titanic* (released in the USA in December 1997 and to the rest of the world in 1998) opened well at theaters in the USA, but then the film's grosses escalated during the next several weeks.

Titanic became one of very few modern, big-budget movies to gross more in its second weekend than its first. This was especially noteworthy, considering that the film's running time of 194 minutes limited the number of showings each theater could schedule. It held the #1 spot on the box-office charts in the USA-Canada for several months; eventually grossing a total of over \$600 million theatrically in the USA and more than \$2 billion worldwide. Then monies from showings on cable and satellite TV, and home video sales doubled the revenue for the Fox studio.

While not thought of as an action film, director James Cameron made significant use of digital effects surrounding



14.16 *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1998).

the sinking and destruction of the ship. Indeed, the audience knew the story of the Titanic's sinking – so the end had to be as spectacular as possible. Cameron also wrote the script and added a fictitious love story told by the female participant in flashback as a means to engage the audience with the real-life tragedy. Fans loved the special effects, but were also drawn by the romance between a working-class young man and a young woman who needed to marry a rich man.



14.17 James Cameron on the set of *Titanic*.

Shooting took place at a reconstruction of the ship built in a new 40-acre studio south of Playas de Rosarito, Mexico – about 15 miles (25km) south of the USA-Mexican border on the Pacific coast. Murdoch approved a 45-foot (14 meters) long miniature Titanic as well as a 50-foot (15.25 meters) lifting platform so as to tilt the Titanic during the sinking sequences. Towering above all this was a 162-foot (49 meters) tower on 600 feet (180 meters) of rail track, acting as a combined lighting and camera platform. Cameron also had installed state of the art **computer-generated imagery** (hereafter CGI) equipment. With a track record of making hits, Murdoch spent \$200 million on production, making *Titanic* at the time the most expensive film ever made.

For publicity, *Titanic* had an advanced screening on 1 November 1997 at the Tokyo Film Festival, where reaction was tepid. This mild reaction proved a poor predictor. The romance narrative worked so well that nearly two months after its première *Titanic* had its biggest single box-office day on 14 February 1998 (Valentine's Day 1998) collecting over \$13 million. By March 1998, *Titanic* became the first blockbuster to earn more than \$1 billion worldwide. Thereafter, all Hollywood tried to match *Titanic*'s blockbuster records, but failed. Only Rupert Murdoch himself – again along with director James Cameron – created and released *Avatar* in December 2009 – to the same success as *Titanic*.

Computer-generated imagery (or CGI) can create special effects images. It is also cost saving as once an image is generated it can easily be manipulated.

THE NEW MEANS OF PRESENTATION – HOME VIDEO

If Hollywood remained the studio capital, what had formerly been called “exhibition” was transformed to home video. In the 1970s one could see some movies on broadcast TV, in theaters, and many on 16mm at film societies. With the coming of cable TV, and home video in the 1980s, most people viewed films on a TV set. The potential of the Internet added the possibility of viewing movies on computer screens. The Hollywood studios still uses the same economic formula – called “classic **price discrimination**” – releasing a film theatrically for its promotion and fame at top prices and then gaining 90 percent of the revenues from video rentals, sales, and pay TV presentation. The studios open their films in a new window only once all value of the previous window has been fully captured.

Price discrimination means maximizing profits by charging different prices to different customers. (The price for a first release cinema ticket is higher than that for the umpteenth pay-per-view run.)

Fans embrace each window. Home video (by the 1990s including DVDs) do best – and add billions of dollars in new revenues. Home video allows the fan to view the film whenever she or he desires. While theatrical premières drew the most publicity, by the close of the twentieth century most of the studios’ revenue come from home video – DVD sales or rental. The usual best predictor of success with DVD comes from a film’s initial weekend box-office results: the higher these were, the better chance of DVD sales and Internet downloading. Although broadcast TV channels have been showing second-run films since 1962, HBO revolutionized the film business in the middle 1970s, as people paid about \$10 a month to see uncut, full-length, non-censored versions of films that had completed their theatrical runs. The demand for pay-TV crested in about 1990, as home video grew steadily more important. These so-called “ancillary” markets – led by home video – made up about 75 percent of a studio’s revenue in the USA by 2000. (In the 1950s “ancillary markets” made up 5 percent of studio revenues.)

Surely the most important transformation in movie watching of the second half of the twentieth century has been the innovation of the video cassette recorder, usually known as the VCR. Home video, representing the VCR and its tapes, enables the movie fan to program his or her own theater. In the convenience of one’s home, one could choose from thousands of the best films ever made. By 1990, a VCR was second only to a TV set in household penetration – about nine of ten. There were thousands and thousands of places – from Blockbusters on down – that would rent and/or sell home videos – principally pre-recorded copies of feature films. Although the home video market was called an ancillary, or secondary, market, it had been generating more revenue than theatrical box-office since 1986.

While the major studios initially protested against the coming of the VCR, it offered them an unprecedented new revenue stream that became the largest single source of revenue to the movie studios by 1990. The innovation of DVD in the late 1990s pushed home video revenues ever upward. The history of home video is short, but offers a vital example of technological innovation in the film business of the late twentieth century.



14.18 The QUBE. An example of technology from Warner Cable in 1977, showing a new way of watching movies on TV, and the world’s first interactive television programming system.

In little more than a decade after the 1976 introduction of the Betamax and the 1978 VHS alternative, rentals and sales of movies on tape – then disc – surpassed the theatrical box-office takings.

On 10 May 1975 Sony's Betamax (sometimes termed Beta) burst on the home electronics market in the USA. The video cassettes contained ½-inch (12.7mm)-wide videotape in a design similar to the earlier, professional ¾-inch (19.05mm) Sony U-matic video cassette format. The format was always considered superior to VHS but lost the marketing battle by 1990. Introduced in September 1976 by JVC, Matsushita's VHS took away the home video market from Sony's Betamax. In the early 1980s Beta was everywhere; by 1990 Beta was nowhere in the USA. Sony finally conceded defeat in 1988 when it, too, began producing VHS recorders.

But VHS lasted as the standard for only 20 years. By 2006, the Hollywood studios had stopped releasing new movie titles in VHS format, opting for DVD and later Blu-ray. Although VHS quickly faded from mainstream home-video release, the VHS machines were simply not thrown away. As of 2005, half the households in the USA still owned VHS format VCRs.

In 2007 most homes in developed nations owned a DVD player. But Sony – innovator of the industry-agreed new type of DVD player called Blu-ray – seemed to be poised to become the new standard. The Great Recession slowed its innovation, but new adopters – about 10 percent of buyers in the USA – heralded its supposedly glorious higher-definition images. In 2008 the Hollywood studios allied and selected Blu-ray as the standard – seeking to avoid the Beta versus VHS war of the 1980s. Blu-ray promised a radically improved picture, supposedly making regular DVDs look pale in comparison; however, the difference never seemed dramatic enough to justify the considerable increase in price. But with the coming of the Great Recession, Sony lowered the prices of its Blu-ray players. Blu-ray Hollywood studio titles, once a feeble trickle, pour into the marketplace.

The stakes are high. By the middle 1990s Disney's *The Lion King* (1994) had become the holy grail of selling videos. As of the end of 1995, *The Lion King* – with a common discounted price of \$19.95 – had sold 30 million units for revenues for Disney with an influx of more than a half billion dollars. While average Hollywood success in 1995 was defined as much by video sales as domestic box-office revenues, *The Lion King* generated nearly twice as much through just video sales alone. All this was pure profit because the feature film had long been fully amortized based on theatrical revenues around the world.

In 1998 direct sales – still some of VHS, but mostly as DVDs – overtook rentals. DVD came to redefine seeing a movie on “video” – even if it was a disc of compressed information measured in the gigabytes. In November 1996, Toshiba introduced the DVD player in Japan and shipped the first to the USA in March 1997, and then a year later to Europe. DVDs offered superior imagery, stereo sound, and extras such as interviews with the stars or commentary by the movie maker. As a bonus to movie historians, studio owners of older movies remastered DVDs of past films and flooded the marketplace.

After 2000 owners of computers began to “burn” copies of DVDs and share files with friends. The Hollywood studios work to halt this sharing as they collect no revenues from what they call illegal sharing. By 2010 the watching of videos on computers is a growing but still limited exhibition means.

On higher definition television sets, DVD displays glorious images. If an owner of a DVD wires a media room with capable speakers, high quality sounds in stereo make home viewing almost theatrical. Movie fans embraced DVDs as they could easily and swiftly move around the DVD – without the rewinding necessary for a VHS tape. By 2005, DVD sales had begun to constitute the bedrock of the revenues for Hollywood movies. Thereafter the social role of movie-going changed as teenagers and twenty-somethings focused

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on sharing their opinions with others by social networking with Twitter and texting. These electronic means replace “word of mouth.” Websites like Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB) make looking up information on movies easy. Even theaters abandon listing show times in newspapers in favor of relying on websites. In sum, movie selection and presentation has significantly changed – all for the better. More people watch more movies now than at any time in the history of movies.

INDEPENDENT MOVIES

Brothers Bob and Harvey Weinstein challenged Hollywood blockbusters at the edge by offering movies with non-traditional stories. Through the 1980s, their Miramax company supplied cheap movies that turned small profits. After 15 years of business they produced *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), a film that made critics rave.



14.19 Quentin Tarantino on the set of *Pulp Fiction*.

Their Miramax became part of the Disney colossus – making small budget, but award-winning movies as a Disney division for ten years – before splitting from Disney in 2005. *Pulp Fiction* made its creator Quentin Tarantino the new auteur, and revived the movie career of John Travolta. Other studio heads could do the calculations. On a budget of \$8.5 million, *Pulp Fiction* grossed \$107.9 million in the USA and \$212.9 million (worldwide). This complex narrative crime film became a blockbuster for the independents – as *Jaws* had done 20 years earlier for the big studios. Critics praised its rich, eclectic dialogue, ironic mix of humor and violence, circular storyline, and host of cinematic allusions and pop culture references. Tarantino was compared favorably with writers from Raymond Chandler to Elmore Leonard. Like these writers, *Pulp Fiction* found a way to make the words humorous without ever seeming to ask for a laugh as it combined utilitarian prose with flights of rough poetry and wicked fancy.

The movie's circular, self-referential plot structure became famous. While it still told a story, it was something different. A restaurant holdup with Pumpkin and Honey Bunny (Tim Roth and Amanda Plummer) begins and ends the film, and other story lines weave in and out, avoiding a strict chronology. There is a chronology in the dialogue, in the sense that what is said before invariably sets up or enriches what comes after. This is why critics praised it.

If the seven sequences of *Pulp Fiction* were chronologically ordered, they would be labeled: 4a, 2, 6, 1, 7, 3, 4b, 5. Sequences 1 and 7 also partially overlapped as presented from different points of view. In other words, while *Pulp Fiction* told a story, its order was far different from that of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style – episodic – allowing references of story elements to each separate episode to be made throughout the narrative. Movie maker Tarantino told interviewer after interviewer that he got the idea of doing something that novelists get a chance to do but filmmakers don't: telling three separate stories, having characters float in and out with different weights depending on the story. Tarantino sought the same flexibility as the printed word.

He offered movie-goers a different kind of movie – still a narrative, but not a traditional one. This breaking with the codes of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style defined independent movies.



14.20 John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994).

Tarantino had to work quickly – taking only two months to shoot. No film score was composed for *Pulp Fiction*, with Quentin Tarantino instead using an eclectic assortment of surf music, rock and roll, soul, and pop songs. So, for example, Tarantino chose surf music as the basic musical style for the film, but not, he insists, because of its association with surfing culture but because it sounded like an amalgamation of rock and roll and the theme music of spaghetti westerns. The sound track album, “Music from the Motion Picture *Pulp Fiction*,” was released along with the film in 1994, and peaked on the *Billboard* music charts at number 21.

Like most independents, *Pulp Fiction* premiered in May 1994 at the Cannes Film Festival. The Weinsteins – backed by Disney – brought the picture's entire cast over. The film was unveiled at a midnight screening and caused a sensation. It won the Palme d'Or, the festival's top prize, generating a wave of publicity. The first US review of the film was aimed at industry insiders. In the 23 May 1994 issue of *Variety* Todd McCarthy called *Pulp Fiction* a “spectacularly entertaining piece of pop culture ... a startling, massive success.”

From Cannes onward, Tarantino was on the road continuously, promoting the film. Over the next few months it played in smaller festivals around Europe, building buzz: Nottingham, Munich, Taormina, Locarno, Norway, and San Sebastian. In late September 1994, *Pulp Fiction* opened the New York Film Festival. *The New York Times* heralded it as beginning a new age of cinema. While *Variety* praised *Pulp Fiction* to industry insiders, *The New York Times* approved it for opinion leaders in the USA.

On 14 October 1994, *Pulp Fiction* went into general release in the USA. It was not platformed, that is, it did not open in a handful of theaters and roll out slowly as word of mouth built, the traditional way of releasing an Indie film; it went wide immediately into 1,100 theaters as distributed by Disney. Miramax played with the narrative issue in its marketing campaign: “You won't know the facts till you've seen the fiction,” went

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one slogan. *Pulp Fiction* was the top-grossing film at the box-office its first weekend, edging out a Sylvester Stallone vehicle, *The Specialist* (Luis Llosa, 1994). Significantly *Pulp Fiction* became the first Indie film to surpass \$100 million in box-office gross in the USA – then the benchmark for blockbuster status. In terms of domestic US grosses, it was the 10th biggest film of 1994, even though it played on substantially fewer screens than any other film in the top 20. The other five major studios immediately copied Disney and Miramax.

The furor around the film aroused the interest of fans and intellectuals. For example, *Artforum* (March 1995) devoted the issue to *Pulp Fiction*'s critical dissection. In 1995, in a special edition of **Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert**'s TV show, the duo devoted one episode wholly to Tarantino. The usually conservative Gene Siskel argued that *Pulp Fiction* escaped the usual Hollywood formula films. In Siskel's view, the violent intensity of *Pulp Fiction* called to mind other violent watershed films that were considered classics in their time: Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). Each film had shaken Hollywood in its day; *Pulp Fiction* shook the Hollywood of 1994.

Consequently, the Hollywood majors established their own divisions to distribute independently made films and began to use film festivals to introduce them to the public. Each Hollywood studio developed some sort of distribution arm to handle Indie films. While it is hard to consider, for instance, *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998) as thematically or stylistically an independent film, because it seems like a classic romantic comedy, the Oscar-winning movie was produced and distributed by Miramax, then owned by the Disney studio.

Such "independent" films came via Hollywood studio divisions: *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997), produced in the UK and distributed by Twentieth Century Fox's Searchlight division, *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry 2000), produced in the UK and distributed by Universal's Focus division, *Saving Grace* (Nigel Cole, 2000), produced in the UK and distributed by Warners' Fine Line Features, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000), produced in a China-Hong Kong-Taiwan-USA co-production and distributed by Sony Pictures Classics, *Sling Blade* (1996), created in the USA by actor Billy Thornton and distributed by Disney's Miramax division. Sometimes studios backed films to be sold as Indie movies, even if the financing began to enter the mainstream. Examples included *The English Patient* (Anthony Minghella, 1996), from Disney's Miramax division, and *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999), from by DreamWorks SKG. It took Paramount's Sumner Redstone until 1998 to start a classics division but by then all the Hollywood studios were in the game of making profits in the so-called independent market. The publicity was worth it alone as these films began to sweep the Academy Awards and thus had further theatrical runs after the Academy Awards telecasts. With the rise of Amazon.com these films were easy to acquire and with Netflix easy to rent by Internet ordering.

The 1980s boom in the newly constituted home video market gave hope to struggling Indies. In the wake of this boom, independent film production went up noticeably; indeed, many films did not find theatrical release but went straight to video. Independent companies vainly attempted to compete with the Hollywood majors in the distribution market.

This is where Miramax and New Line entered. These two companies were celebrated as the saviours of the Indies and became home to acclaimed directors like Paul Thomas Anderson, Steven Soderbergh, and Quentin Tarantino. New Line Cinema had been founded in 1967 and started distributing films on college campuses. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) became its first hit. In 1990, New Line landed another hit with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Steve Barron, 1990), by then the most successful independent film (US box office: \$135 million). By 1996, New Line was owned by Warner Bros.

Gene Siskel (1946–1999) and Roger Ebert (1942–) were the most influential US film critics. From 1975 until Siskel's death in 1999 they hosted a movie-review TV show. Ebert's Blog is one of the most viewed in the USA.

The Hollywood studios capitalized on the popularity of niche market films. The 1990s not only witnessed the launch of many majors' art house divisions, but also of several new independents, most of which had started as distribution companies. October Films was founded in 1991 (and bought by Universal in 1997). In 1993, the Gramercy distribution company was established as a joint venture of Universal and Polygram (a European music company) to sell independent movies. Gramercy, like October, was wholly absorbed by Universal in 1998.

The Great Recession of 2008–2010 ended investments in independent movies by the Hollywood studios. The major studios returned to simply creating mainstream blockbusters; the success of independent movies distributed by the major studios proved just a phase of Hollywood history. Looking back, Disney exploited Miramax for its publicity value – their creation of Oscar winners such as *The English Patient* (1996), *Good Will Hunting* (Gus Van Sant, 1997), and *Chocolat* (Lasse Hallström, 2000).

The Indie wave lasted until the Great Recession of 2008–2010. Overall while theatrical box-office was up, the returns on Indie films in the USA were down. Yet that did not mean the elimination of all Indie movies. In 2008, *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, 2008) broke all box-office records for an Indie – as distributed by Warners and Fox. After its world première at the Telluride Film Festival and subsequent screenings at the Toronto International Film Festival and the London Film Festival, Fox and Warners divided the risk and agreed to co-distribute the film.

The film was made in India as a joint deal by two British firms: Celador Films and Film4. Warner and Fox initiated limited runs in the USA on 12 November 2008. All the Indie Internet sites flared up and so Fox and Warners placed the film about a teenager winning a quiz show into mass release on 23 January 2009 across the USA. (Ironically, it did not open in India until the same date.) At a classic running time of two hours, in English and Hindi, it cost “only” \$15 million to make and by the fall of 2009, it had grossed revenue around the world of \$360 million – and was expected to top a half billion dollars. *Slumdog Millionaire* uses the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style to tell the story of how a poor young man from the slums of Mumbai wins the Indian version of the TV quiz show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” This poor, under-educated young man keeps on winning and the film – in flashbacks – explains how he came to win.

It was released on DVD (and the new Blu-ray DVD format) in the USA on 31 March 2009 to take advantage of its success at the Academy Awards TV show. *Slumdog Millionaire* was nominated for ten Academy Awards in 2009 and won eight, the most for any film of 2008, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay. Following its success at the 81st Academy Awards, the film's takings increased



14.21 *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008). The main character in the game show (1); a happy ending as the two are finally united (2); a happy dance concludes the film as a reference to Bollywood (3).

by 43 percent, the most for any film since *Titanic*. In the weekend of 27 February to 1 March 2009, the film reached its widest release at 2,943 theaters. It was a Hollywood-style romantic melodrama that delivered major studio satisfactions in an ultra-modern romance.

THE CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD NARRATIVE STYLE CONTINUES

The Hollywood studios continued to use their studios and stylistic system to fashion blockbusters through the period of Indie prosperity. The quirky Indie style was not ever considered mainstream. Indie films offer an alternative means to tell stories. An Indie film also usually has one trait that differentiates its narrative – usually by treating a non-mainstream subject or adding violence that is rarely found in blockbusters. Indie films can rely on an R-rating because they seek a small educated audience, while studios seek PG-13 ratings for blockbusters so teenagers can flock into the theaters.

But during the contemporary age where computers are an integral part of the filmmaking process, new iterations of the Classical Hollywood style of story-telling emerge. For example, fans raised on TV advertising – the so-called MTV generation – expect “fast cutting” in action blockbuster films like the Bourne trilogy – where the shots in chase sequences average less than two seconds. But fast cutting also seems the trend for Indie experiments as *Slumdog Millionaire* is “cut fast” as well – perhaps five seconds a shot.

This new look of story-telling is also embraced by movie fans who have grown up watching television and older musical forms – all which have longer (in terms of time) shots. While watching Classical Hollywood Narrative Style movies on DVDs and the Turner Classic TV network, fans began to associate longer takes with the Hollywood of the past. Faster cutting differentiates the style of blockbuster Hollywood – paced at such a speed that the fan is forced to pay closer attention.

The fast-cutting also encourages directors to build dialogue scenes out of isolated shots of actors, usually close-ups. Depending on one’s evaluation of the new “fast-cutting” style, the explanation for “fast cutting” has its start in the 1980s with the innovation of rapidly paced MTV videos. Simultaneously, theater movie advertisements (called “trailers”) and shorter versions of ads for upcoming movies on TV are also cut rapidly – to tempt fans into theaters. On television, ads last only 30 seconds and so “fast-cutting” becomes the norm – allied with the growth of the blockbuster.

At the same time, fast cutting becomes easier to create with digital tools and computers. Soon, young “movie” makers learned that when they try to find work in Hollywood their pitches to studio bosses are far more successful with rapidly edited sequences of student films. This even took on a term – the high concept film – defined as one where the basic narrative could be summed up in 30 seconds. And the required number of shots to make the 120-minute feature topped 2,000.

But major studios still tell stories for mass audiences in the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. Indeed a blockbuster establishes a story that can then be done again and again with sequels – and even more money can be made. Indies are expected to expose “the invisible story.” The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style sees experiments on the margins – indeed the most notable is ever-faster editing. But no one is calling for the complete abandonment of the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. As films grow faster, movie makers grow even more dependent on matching cuts so as to preserve continuity, positioning cameras to make for easily followed continuity, and mise-en-scène that emphasizes single central characters.

To make this fast-paced montage understandable, the stories must contain repeated objects and repeated lines of dialogue to serve as standard cohesion devices. For example, in *Erin Brockovich* (Steven Soderbergh,

2000), the key figure who will unlock the mystery is seen repeatedly – but always in various crowd scenes. He seems like just another citizen of Hinkley, California – poisoned by the evil contamination by the electrical power company. Only in the end do the movie makers reveal that he had saved legal papers that linked the corporate office to the poisoning of the water in Hinkley – the quest of Erin Brockovich. We do not even learn his name until closure (Charles Embry). But when we do and his information breaks the case, we remember – with pleasure – that he was always there.



14.22 *Erin Brockovich* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000).

Blockbusters offer Hollywood greater profits; blockbuster sequels offer the greatest profits. Facing a summer packed with sequels, film reviewers regularly assert that blockbuster sequels prove that the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style on a big-budget scale lacks any visual imagination and any treatment of complex themes.

Hollywood as a cultural industry creates familiar stories – as demonstrated by box-office popularity, but also each movie must somehow prove to be different. Trailers on television prepare the audience to expect a new take on some familiar form. Sequels offer the possibility of recognizable repetition, but can offer an intriguing variation. Sequels happen because the studio owners have never figured out any business model to predict the success of a feature film. If a movie is unexpectedly popular, perhaps a sequel will be almost as popular. Usually Hollywood studios do not expect Part 2's revenues to match those of Part 1.

What reviewers fail to engage with is the cost side of running a studio. With the investment in Part 1, the costs of Part 2, all other things being kept equal, should be lower. So even if Part 2's revenues prove lower, with a smaller investment, the profits can be considerable. Given the mercenary impulse behind sequels, does a director's willingness to make Part 2 mean that he or she has sold out? This seems not to be the case as even celebrated directors sign contracts to direct a sequel. Director Steven Soderbergh did *Ocean's Eleven* (2001), *Ocean's Twelve* (2003), and *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007). Christopher Nolan left the originality of *Memento* (2000) to do Batman movies.

Reviewers also reject another contemporary Hollywood trend of basing blockbusters and sequels on comic books. They assume that no one could (or should) take any version of Spider-Man seriously, or Batman or Superman. Knowing a story beforehand does not preclude suspense or excitement. Arguably knowing a story actually allows a director greater opportunities for unpredictability. In the contemporary Hollywood comic book blockbuster era, often the sequels are more complex than the first entries. To these critics *Spider-Man 2* (2002) was better than *Spider-Man* (2004), and *X-2: X Men United* (Bryan Singer, 2003) was better than *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000). The director who establishes the base of the sequel franchise often sticks closely with the Classical Hollywood Narrative Style. But once the sequel base enjoys significant economic success, the studio making the sequel searches for some differentiation to sell and thus offer directors more leeway.

Sequels will continue since there has long been in Hollywood a propensity toward the never-ending story in genres like science fiction, superhero comics, and mystery novels. To reviewers, such serials tend to have a low aesthetic reputation in comparison to more respectable genres. Serial forms have historically been associated with children (for example, comic books). In other words, there is cultural distinction, a system of social hierarchy, at play.

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Hollywood also pursues movies that will make profit because they are aimed at smaller audiences. A non-block-buster usually focuses on a new variation of a familiar story starring well-known actors and actresses. For example, a romantic comedy like Nancy Meyers' *The Holiday* (2006) recouped its cost because Meyers hired (and Sony and Universal approved) stars Kate Winslet, Cameron Diaz, Jude Law, and Jack Black. Sony and Universal co-financed and co-distributed a film that focuses on two women frustrated with failure with romantic love. One (Winslet) feels unrequited love, rejected by the male she pursues; the other (Diaz) simply falls out of love and needs a new surrounding to find a man who appreciates her. In this dualistic way *The Holiday* employs all of Hollywood's traditional narrative tricks. The viewer is absorbed as Meyers shuttles from character to character, knowing more than any one of them does, but still not knowing everything.



14.23 *The Holiday* (Nancy Meyers, 2006). Classic romantic comedy – two women exchanging houses and finding love. References to Hollywood: with the help of a Hollywood writer Arthur (Eli Wallach) both women become happy (2); reference to the film *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks) (3); a conventional happy ending (4).

For long-time female film fans, director/writer Meyers also added references to classic Hollywood, as the repressed newspaper writer (Kate Winslet of *Titanic* fame) is helped into romance by an old Hollywood screenwriter and with her new boyfriend watches Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday* (1940). Nancy Meyers is a singular figure in Hollywood – the most powerful female writer-director-producer able to gain consistent work. She ranks as one of a handful of active female producer-director-writers. Meyers is one of those rare people in or out of Hollywood for whom power is not an end in itself but a means to an end – in her case, the ability to get films like *What Women Want* (2000), *Something's Gotta Give* (2003), and *It's Complicated* (2009) made precisely as she envisioned them.

In Meyers' *The Holiday*, the history of movies is everywhere. Dustin Hoffman appears in the video rental store in an uncredited cameo as Jack Black talks about the score from *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967). Contemporary teen idols Lindsay Lohan and James Franco give uncredited appearances in the movie trailer being finished as the film begins. *The Holiday*, which centers around Christmas and New Year's Eve, has begun a yearly run on cable TV in the USA every Christmas season.

Most of the 300 theatrical films released each year continue Hollywood's narrative tradition straightforwardly, through practiced tactics of subject or style. The studio executives ask: What well-tested devices

tell my story most effectively? Here Meyers offers a new audience and so has put her stamp on a worn-out genre. She seeks to extend ideas which the studio system has failed to explore fully. Meyers has the same skill set as Howard Hawks of never pushing the Classical Narrative Style too far away from the accepted norms, yet appealing to a defined audience who loved 1930s and 1940s Hollywood genre movies, and sought comfort in the genre of the romantic comedy.

THE FUTURE

No one – certainly not us – can predict the future. But we can be sure that the story-driven use of cinematic technology will persist. The Classical Hollywood Narrative Style will remain dominant. The year 2010 ended with record box-office revenues for USA and Canada – with James Cameron’s *Avatar*; a dozen years after James Cameron created the highest grossing film in movie history, Rupert Murdoch again backed him with this science fiction story of the future (see case study at the end of this chapter).



14.24 James Cameron on the set of *Avatar*.

On one hand Cameron is heralded as commander-in-chief of an army of visual-effects technicians, creature designers, and motion-capture mavens. Critic after critic hails Cameron for innovating a new type of science-fiction movie. They praise his risk-taking, as *Avatar* – unlike *Titanic* – has no underlying novel or myth to generate his story. Cameron has been working on something wholly new and only made his film after he discovered that the technology he needed could be crafted. So for *Avatar*, Cameron and his hundreds of helpers fashioned “motion capture” that captured details of the actors’ performances transformed into inhabitants of a distant planet in 2154. If the theater-going customer is willing to pay an extra \$5 over the usual \$10 admission fee she or he is offered characters filmed in a new 3-D process featuring in a Classical Hollywood narrative.

Cameron’s “cutting edge” 3-D process made *Avatar* a massive hit – the highest grossing movie of all time. Cameron used a technique known as “motion capture,” making 10-foot tall blue creatures “act” human, and his **Fusion Camera System** proves attractive at the box-office. During its four years of production – costing in excess of \$300 million – Cameron’s collaborators excelled at what all critics hail as a new type of filmmaking. Yet these films still come from a handful of studios, and follow Classical Hollywood Narrative rules. The history of movies is over 100 years old, yet since 1921 Hollywood has dominated the world of movies. It will continue to do so.

The Fusion Camera System is a single camera that shoots live action in stereoscopic 3-D.

CASE STUDY 14

THE RECEPTION OF JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR

On Monday 25 January 2010 *Variety* headlined on page 1 that “Avatar is King of the World.” James Cameron’s epic *Avatar* has passed his prior film *Titanic* to become history’s highest-grossing film. *Avatar* has received a sizable boost from higher-priced tickets for 3-D and IMAX showings.

Through that historic Monday – just 39 days after its world premiere – *Avatar*’s ticket sales around the world reached \$1.86 billion, edging past the \$1.84 billion in sales posted by *Titanic*. The monies from ticket sales in the USA amount to only one-fourth of the worldwide total.

The world record proves sweet vindication, both for James Cameron and for Twentieth Century Fox – as both are behind the making of *Titanic* and *Avatar*. Skeptics have questioned whether director-producer-writer James Cameron could deliver on his promise of a revolutionary visual experience and whether Twentieth Century Fox would profit from the film.

Avatar has proved wildly popular around the world. For example, Chinese movie-goers flocked to see it, but the Chinese government pulled it for 2-D (standard format) showings two days before *Avatar* would become the highest grosser in world history. The state-run China Film Group ordered cinemas across the country to show primarily the 3-D edition of the film and cut the number of screenings of the 2-D version as of 23 January 2010. Reports that the hugely popular movie would be pulled ahead of schedule sparked a furor on the Chinese Internet amid charges the government had shunted it aside to make way for the patriotic biopic *Confucius* (Mei Hu, 2010).

This is in line with Chinese limitations on the number of foreign films permitted to be shown in the country to 20 per year. Chinese government policy seeks to regulate “foreign” imports so as to not lose precious screen time to Hollywood films. While many Hollywood films have shorter runs in Chinese theaters than their producers would have liked, limiting the screenings of a success like *Avatar* is rare. According to Twentieth Century Fox, *Avatar* is the most successful movie of all-time in Chinese theatres.

Chinese officials do not want to kill theatrical sales altogether so *Avatar* continues to play in some 2-D theaters but filled more popular 3-D screens – about 1,000 in number. In the end, the Chinese government sides with the filmmakers of China, not those in control of movie theaters. The governmental policy makes sure that Chinese films get their fair percentage of screen time – even though Chinese audiences prefer *Avatar*.

The 3-D version proves popular in cities. Cui Weiping, a film critic and a professor at the Beijing Film Academy, confessed that he wanted to see *Avatar* even though its vast attendance in the most populous nation in the world did not help China’s own film industry. As the policy of the Chinese government looks to expand, fans in China demand to see Hollywood films. This universal appeal will continue as only the Hollywood industry employs a system to turn out movies that appeal in a globalized world.



14.25 Film poster for 3-D IMAX screening of *Avatar* at Peace Cinema, People’s Square, Shanghai, China.

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GLOSSARY

180-degree rule

This ensures that characters are always displayed in the same relative position. (See diagram in Chapter 3, p. 63.)

Anamorphic lens

Compresses the image horizontally when filming thus allowing to record a wide view. When projected the image is stretched again.

Arc lighting

One of the earliest forms of supplemental studio electrical lighting that was slowly replaced by incandescent lights – that had longer burning-hours – before the introduction of sound. It was also used for film projection.

Blockbuster

After 1975, “blockbuster” refers to a highly popular and profitable movie with big stars in it. The term denotes the distinction between super-hit movies from those which drew ordinary audiences.

Cinéaste

The word *cinéaste* was introduced by Louis Delluc to indicate the difference between commercial and art-film makers.

Computer-generated imagery

Computer-generated imagery (or CGI) can create special effects images. It is also cost saving as once an image is generated it can easily be manipulated.

Craning

Camera movement in which the camera is lifted above the ground with the help of a crane.

Depth of field

Depth of field is the distance between the first and the last object in a shot that is still shown in sharp focus.

Diegetic sound

The source of the music (or sounds) must be specified in the film itself and is part of the fictional world created in the film, like for example dialogue. Non-diegetic music (or sounds) is the opposite of this: its source lies outside the fiction world in the film as is the case with for example a voice-over which can only be heard by the audiences.

Dissolve

A dissolve overlays two shots: one shot fades out and a second shot fades in at the same time.

DVD

Also known as “Digital Versatile Disc” or “Digital Video Disc.” An optical digital storage of a movie. DVDs are of the same dimensions as compact discs (CDs), but by use of “compressed digital information” store more than six times as much data as a music CD.

Emmy Award

US television prize awarded by Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, first given out in 1949.

Establishing shot

A wide shot that sets the situation in a scene and explains to the viewer where it is taking place and where the character(s) is (are) positioned. It is often used at the beginning of a new scene.

Eyeline match

An eyeline is an imaginary line that connects the character with what he is looking at. If in shot 1 the character is shown looking at something, then in shot 2 the object he is looking at should be in the same eyeline.

Fade-in

This means that the image slowly changes from blackness to the actual image.

Fade-out

This means that the image slowly disappears to blackness.

Fusion Camera System

A single camera that shoots live action in stereoscopic 3-D.

Graphic editing

This creates a graphic relation between shots

Independent films

Also called “Indie films”. The term “independent” is used widely and variably, here it is defined as films not released by a major studio’s mainstream division.

Inter-titles

Short texts edited between scenes in silent films to fashion speech, explain action, and explain important story information to the viewer. They were used to establish time and place of the action, to introduce the characters and their relations, and to replace dialogue (as there was no sound). Inter-titles could easily be changed by cutting them out and replacing them in another language. In that way a film could be adapted to local preferences and/or different languages.

Iris

A type of mask to cover the lens of the camera with a round in the middle that can widen and narrow like an iris.

Kinematoscope

The kinematoscope showed movement through a succession of images shown as a recurring series in a drum-like instrument. It was never marketed commercially but the technique was used in further experiments with moving images.

Long shot

Using a 75mm lens, the long shot can situate characters in relationship with each other in filmic space.

Long take

A long *take* means that the shot lasts more than ten seconds, sometimes two minutes or more in duration.

Masking the frame

Masking the frame means that the lens of the camera is partly covered by a piece of opaque material to obscure parts of the image it records.

Master shot

A master shot is the recording of an entire scene. After the master shot is filmed, parts of the scene can be filmed again from another angle or from a closer distance. In the cutting room these shots are put together after shooting out of order.

Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène is a French expression literally meaning “what is placed on the stage.” In cinema it encompasses what is placed in front of the cameras – actors, their behavior, props, settings, lighting, and costumes.

Moviola

With the Moviola it was possible to view the cuts the editor had made with the same machine instead of having to put the edited film in a film projector. This saved an enormous amount of time and money and the machine was an instant success.

Pan

A movement of the body of the camera to the left or to the right while it stays in the same place.

Phonograph

Phonograph means literally sound (phono) writer (graph). In 1877 Thomas Edison invented the first phonograph that could record and play back sound. Initially, it was used in offices as a kind of mechanical secretary but soon it became used in many other ways, including talking dolls, music recordings, speech recordings, and accompaniment of magic lantern shows and early movies.

Rhythmic editing

This defines the length of the different succeeding shots and of the movie as a whole. To build up a climax, for example, the length of the shots is cut shorter and shorter.

Road Pictures

A series of musical-comedy-romance-action films with a similar plot produced by Paramount starring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and Dorothy Lamour.

Spatial editing

This constructs the film space through editing in such a way that the viewer understands where the action is taking place – for example, by first giving an overview of the space and then showing parts of it.

Split screen

A frame is split into two (or more) separate images. For example, two different actions happening at the same time at different places can be shown in one frame.

Superimposition

A superimposition means that the different images of two frames are overlaid (superimposed) in one image and one frame.

Temporal editing

This defines the temporal relations between the events in the story. A flashback or a flash forward are examples of temporal editing.

Three-color Technicolor process

First three negative films – green, blue, and red – are made, then three positive films, matrices in

hardened gelatine, are made. Finally the matrices print the three separate images (in green, blue, and red) on one blank film strip and the final film copy is ready.

Tracking shot

A shot made by a moving camera that “tracks” its subject and moves through the space on rails (tracks).

Travelogues

Travelogues or travel films were designed to entertain and educate audiences with short films of unknown parts of the world. Topics could range from the Niagara Falls, train rides through the Western USA, moving images of exotic lands, and famous sights such as the Eiffel Tower.

Vaudeville theaters

Vaudeville theaters offered a selection of variety acts from singers to dancers, from comics to animal tricks. The first vaudeville theater in New York (USA) was the Bowery Theater, opened in 1865 and aimed at a family audience. They became very popular and were called variety shows in music halls in Europe.

Wide-screen

Wide-screen refers to the format of the film strip, the so-called “aspect ratio” meaning the relation between the height and the length of one frame. The standard aspect ratio is 1.33:1. When the aspect ratio is higher than 1.33:1 it is called wide-screen.

Windows

Time frames during which films could be viewed in theaters, then on DVD, then over subscription cable channels, and via video on demand by cable or satellite delivered TV.

Wipe

The visible transition from one shot to the other whereby the first shot is slowly wiped away and replaced by the second shot.

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